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The effect of Covid on local Uni Connect evaluation plans

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Evaluating UC Phase 2

- What we initially intended to do
- How we revised our evaluation design in the face of Covid-19 – twice
- Ongoing challenges

Initial evaluation design – Sept' 2019

- Mixed methods approach:
 - 6 case study schools and 2 colleges - qualitative data
 - Semi-structured interviews with LH Area Engagement Officers & key stakeholders - qualitative data
 - An end of year student activity survey – quantitative data
- Each case study involved:
 - Student focus groups – all years, by UC & non-UC – twice a year
 - Visiting schools to view outreach delivery - 2-3 times a year
 - Semi-structured interviews with school / college leads – twice a year
 - Tracking a small number of UC students in each school using data from the National Learner Survey & the Explaining the Gap project
- All qualitative data was to be collected in person

Revised evaluation design – Sept' 2020

Heavily influenced by Covid-19 / unstable situation.

We also took into account changes to LHs delivery model:

- From bespoke delivery to core offers by area.

Qualitative data:

- Case study schools continued to be the main focus:
 - 2 sets of focus groups – online if necessary, autumn & summer term
 - Short open surveys / reflective diaries, 6-8 students per year group, UC & non-UC - ongoing
 - 2 interviews with each School and College Lead
- Use of matched student data for yrs 10 & 11 where possible (taken from Wave 1, 2 & now the activity survey)

Evaluation of activities in *all* schools

Quantitative data

- Evaluation of LHs online activity platform – launched June 2020 in response to Covid-19 and school closures.
- Online surveys - include pre & post questions - for *all* substantial core outreach activities & CS Core+.
- An end of year student *outcome* survey.
- All above mapped to the NERUPI Framework.
- All data to be collected by early-June.

Challenges for the evaluation

Qualitative data:

- So far this year there has been:
 - Little in-school ‘real life’ delivery & limited online delivery
 - No access into schools for evaluators
 - Only one visit per school is now likely – late June / July
- Most delivery will take place in the summer term.
- Data collection is constantly being pushed back.
- There will be little time to assess anything other than immediate / short term impact.
- Far less qualitative data than we envisaged.

Quantitative challenges

- Students are not completing online surveys
 - When schools were closed:
 - Links to surveys (and the reflective dairies) are not sent out / school has no visibility or influence as to who completes them.
 - When schools are open:
 - Class teacher logs on rather than individual students signing in;
 - Students do not have access to ICT suites or mobile phones;
 - No time for evaluation at the end of a session;
 - Students (often whole cohorts) absent as isolating.
 - Data collected from a small number of schools, rather than all.
- Paper copies of all surveys available but costly and time consuming. And someone needs to input the data!
- Survey Catch Up Month – organised by LH
- Timing of FGs & outcome survey, esp. getting Yrs 11 & 13?

To sum up

- Phase 2 UC evaluation has not really gone according to plan, any plan.
- No one could have foreseen Covid-19 or the implications it would have for schools and students and subsequently the UC programme, including the evaluation.
- It is still a constantly changing situation.
- It's challenging to get schools to engage in evaluation when they have so much else to think about.
- We're keeping our fingers crossed we get some usable & valuable data.



Question

How has Covid-19 changed your evaluation plans?

What evaluation challenges have you faced and how have they been addressed?

What can YOU do to ensure you have the impact data you need? - collaborative focus groups?

What will your end of Phase 2 data look like?