

Case Study: Lesley Watts, Librarian, King Edward VI School, Stratford –upon-Avon

Supporting the Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Level 2 HPQ in Year 10

King Edward VI School in Stratford-upon-Avon is a state-funded academy trust. It is a selective school for boys with a co-educational sixth form and 746 students on roll. Lesley Watts is a qualified librarian (B.Lib.) who has been in post for nearly twelve years.

The project focused on helping Year 10 to do well in the Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Level 2 HPQ by working in co-operation with their teacher, providing information on how to reference and avoid plagiarism, and improving their access to a range of high-quality resources. The entire cohort of Year 10 students was to undertake this qualification and outcomes would be measured with a questionnaire and by the quality of their finished projects.

Lesley had been teaching referencing, avoiding plagiarism and searching for resources to Sixth Form EPQ students for several years. The History department had also invited her to cover referencing for their Sixth Form classes and for a previously-run history EPQ, which they had discontinued once the new GCSE History curriculum was introduced. Dominic Leach, Head of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, therefore knew Lesley led sessions on referencing and invited her to talk to Year 10.

School lessons are 45 minutes long and referencing is a big subject, so she decided that she would spend the time explaining and demonstrating referencing with the aid of a PowerPoint. Although there would not be time for the students to practice their skills, Lesley encouraged them to call into the School Library at any time if they needed help or advice. She put the presentation on Moodle, the school's virtual learning environment, along with other material the students could consult whilst researching.

This was the second year that Dominic Leach had run this course, so Lesley already had a presentation prepared. As always, she checked through it to see if any improvements could be made in the light of

last year's talk; although the presentation was based on the Sixth Form versions, Lesley edited it to make it shorter and less complicated, and also used examples of books, magazines and websites that dealt with philosophy. This not only made it more relevant, but also encouraged students to seek out some of the resources mentioned for their own research. Lesley was careful to use books and journals found in the School Library.

The presentation covered the reasons for referencing, what constitutes plagiarism and what referencing looks like. Both a name-date system (Harvard) and a numerical system (MHRA) were demonstrated as well as how to reference common formats such as books, journals and websites using both systems. The presentation finished by listing some of the online tools that could help students with referencing as well as mentioning the book "Cite Them Right" by Pears and Shields (2016). Students were allowed to pick a referencing system of their choice for the project although their teacher encouraged them to use Harvard – this presented an opportunity to talk about the strengths of particular systems.

The other strand of the project involved improving the provision of resources in the School Library for students to use in their research. Last year, Lesley responded to student requests for material when they were searching in the library and this information, combined with a list of student topics provided by their teacher, was used to purchase new books. This year, Lesley decided to create a questionnaire and analyse the data so that she was not only reacting to those who asked her for resources. She realised that students may not pick the same subjects in the same numbers next year, but still felt this method gave her a checklist of subjects to build on.

Part of the School's mission statement is to '*encourage each individual to fulfil their academic potential by placing particular emphasis on challenge, teamwork, independence, creativity and enjoyment*'. (King Edward VI School Mission Statement, 2019).

Aims of the curriculum policy include helping *'each student gain a sense of self-worth, independence of thought and develop a questioning approach which challenges prejudice...[and] to develop students as flexible and independent learners.'* (King Edward VI School Curriculum Policy, 2019).

Dominic Leach, as Head of Department, chose the HPQ because it *"was a better fit for RPE rather than the narrow RS GCSE which limits the scope of what they can learn about and only assesses a few skills. The HPQ better prepares the boys for academic study at A-level and at university. The critical thinking element is the aspect of my subject which I think is the most important and assessing the value of sources as well as the value of the argument and evidence is something that the HPQ encourages."*

Learning to avoid plagiarism and promoting academic honesty, of which referencing is a vital part, is an important aspect of the type of independent learning and research that will be expected of students at university and which is part of the School's mission statement and curriculum policy. Ninety-five percent of King Edward VI School students go to university, so this is an early opportunity for them to undertake an extended piece of research using the type of knowledge and skills employed by academics.

Being able to use libraries to search for resources, either online or in print form, is an important skill for university study. As Godfrey (2010, p.35) says, *'With so much stuff available online, some students don't go near their university library until the end of their second year or later. This is a real shame because your library can help you with some of the very problems that arise from information overload. Don't make the mistake of thinking that the internet is just like a big online library – it isn't! Go to your library and get a demonstration of how the catalogue system works, which books and journals are available online, what the short loan section contains, how many items you can take out at once and what the late return penalties are.'*

Lesley devised a short questionnaire consisting of thirteen questions which involved circling options or ranking them. This was printed out and given to students to complete once they had submitted their project. The form was designed to be quick

and easy to complete, and not take up too much of their or their teacher's time. She entered the data in a spreadsheet and produced some graphs. When asked to rate her presentation on referencing, most students (85%) rated it as *'somewhat'* or *'very helpful'*. There was a noticeable change in their perception of their knowledge of referencing by the end of the project. Before the start of the project and the lesson on referencing, very few of them rated their knowledge as more than average, with 50% of them believing their knowledge was below average or poor. Afterwards, 73% rated their knowledge as *'above average'* or *'excellent'*.

The specification for the qualification states that, *'There should be a range of sources (at least three) which must include more than one type of information source. This means, for example, that not all of the research can be carried out on the internet: there must be another type of research (for example books). Higher marks may be available for learners who use primary sources. Learners should comment on the reliability of secondary sources. Records should be kept of the sources of all relevant research carried out, with appropriate referencing of the sources in a bibliography. (Non-relevant information should not be recorded.)'* (Edexcel Specification, 2008, p.29.).

Students rated the internet as the most useful resource, and a number of them accessed it via the School Library computers, but they also used books from the School Library and public library. Of those who used the School Library, 93% of them found at least some relevant books on the shelves. Several students asked if Lesley could find more specific material for them. For example, one student was finding it hard to source material on the ethics of genetic engineering. He had borrowed one book from the School Library, but it wasn't specific enough. Lesley researched some sources and purchased *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* by Michael Sandel, which the student borrowed and used for his project. Another had found the beginning of an article he wanted to read on The New Scientist website entitled *What are you worth?* by Shannon Fischer, but the full article was protected by a paywall. The Library failed to find a complete copy online and back issues did not go as far as 2016.

Thanks to a request for help on the School Librarian's Network (a member-only forum), Lesley was able to supply the student with a complete copy of the article.

The School plan to repeat the project next year, although will switch to the AQA Board because Edexcel have scrapped their Level 2 HPQ. Lesley will again review her presentation to see if any improvements are necessary. The questionnaire asked if students thought any other aspect of the HPQ could be usefully covered in class and nearly as many of them thought a guide to finding resources would be almost as valuable as referencing and avoiding plagiarism. Lesley considers this may be an area for discussion with Dominic Leach, as she already undertakes a session on this for Sixth Form EPQ students. She will also be reviewing library stock and, budget permitting, adding any relevant books on topics with inadequate coverage.

TEACHER'S EVIDENCE FROM DOMINIC LEACH, HEAD OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

Referencing

It is clear from the data collected that this was the most successful element of the project. Nearly all students learnt a lot about referencing. Additionally, since the PowerPoint was available to students via the VLE after the presentations, they were able to review the details as they referenced sources. I think this was useful to the students.

Avoiding plagiarism

Whilst it cannot be shown empirically, the fact that there were no students who were guilty of plagiarism suggests that students understand the risks and they are likely to have been influenced by the talk from Lesley.

Using, and accessing, resources

It is clear from the data collected that those students who used the library and the librarian as resources, benefited from them. Although there are a fair number, there are still not enough students using the library but I am confident that this will increase given the impact it is having as a resource. By comparison to last year, an increased number of students used valuable sources and used a greater range of sources.

In short, the support of the librarian and the library has been outstanding and invaluable.

As for the data from last year's cohort, it is in red below and this year's is in blue.

A*	A	B	C	Dropouts
36	32	9	4	1
44%	39%	11%	5%	
27	36	10	6	4
34%	46%	13%	7%	

Advice:

1. Only embark on this if you enjoy referencing and feel secure in your knowledge of it. Teachers will have referenced on their university courses, so you need to show you have a more detailed knowledge of the subject and are going to save them time by teaching it.
2. Allow plenty of time, not only to prepare your lesson and materials, but to input and analyse any data that measures the outcome. You need to be clear how you will record and measure your data before you create a questionnaire.
3. Co-operate with a teacher. They know their classes, can advise on classroom techniques and may provide you with an invaluable list of topics to improve library provision.
4. Be prepared for the success of a project like this leading to other teachers asking you to do similar ones. Decide in advance how much time you have available to devote to such work, especially if you are a sole worker on limited hours.

References

Edexcel (2008) Edexcel specification: Edexcel level 1 foundation project (ZPJ10) Edexcel level 2 higher project (ZPJ20). First award summer 2009, issue 2, August 2008, Edexcel Limited, <https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Project-Qualification/Level-1-and-Level2/2010/Specification/Project-Specification-Level-12.pdf>.

Godfrey, J. (2010) *Reading and making notes*, Palgrave Macmillan.

King Edward VI School (2019) *Curriculum policy*, www.kes.net/files/cms/830_M%20-%20Curriculum%20Policy.pdf. King Edward VI School (2019) *Mission statement*, www.kes.net/aboutus/mission-statement.

Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2016) *Cite them right*, 10th edn, Palgrave Macmillan.

Bibliography

I have read numerous books and articles on the subject of referencing and avoiding plagiarism over the years as well as reading other school librarians' experiences on the online forum The School Librarians' Network.

Books I have found particularly useful include:

Godfrey, J. (2013) *How to use your reading in your essays*, 2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, K. and Carroll, J. (2009) *Referencing and understanding plagiarism*, Palgrave Macmillan.