Action Research Project

FOCUS

Friday 19th January 2024

By: Tonia Vassell

- Supporting on the BDM year's 2 and 3

- I chose to look at the topic FOCUS

To develop and ehance their study life

- Distractions and outside challenges can impact on The journey

- Completing Assignments Projects and collaborative working

- The research process was guided by time spent in conversations with students

- With determination to concentrate

- Reflecting on their approaches

My Research Question

What practices and strategies do my students use to **Focus** on their work and what can I do to help?

Some of the challenges students are facing

Stress and burnout

Cognitive Stress

Conditions they are surrounded by

What state are they in

Using most of their energy in other places

General family stress

Lack of self awareness, how am I feeling today

What can I do with low energy
Brain storm / Write a list

Social media

Distant learning

Poor home environment

I Collected Quantitive data

The Methods and Methodologies

The idea behind focus groups was developed by Paul Lazarsfeld.

- **Free Listing**
- **Ranking Method**
- **Labelling Method**
- **Rating method**

  More on my blog

Additionally I used

- **Note taking**
- **Annotated Audio Recording**
- **Reflections**
- **Photography/**no faces
- **Accepted Sketches**

Coded into themes and

put together a frequency table

The reason why I chose
this method
goes hand in hand
with my
personality and delivery

I set a relaxed and creative atmosphere

A number of structured and semi structured questions and activities.

Guided the discussions and encouraged participation

Allowing flexability for free flowing conversations and further discussions.
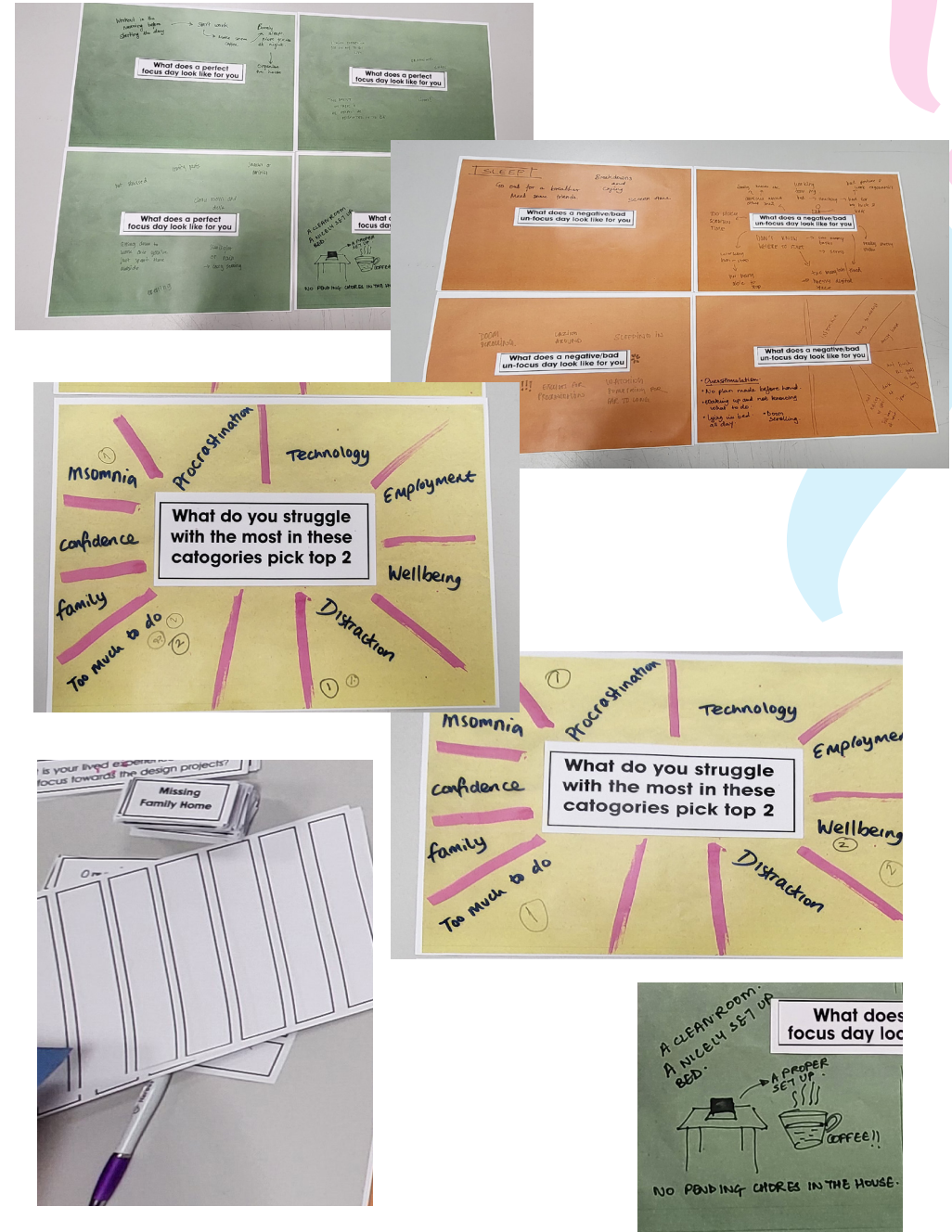
Rationale

- Discovered it was a popular struggle

- Avoid students feeling isolated

- Most students didnt know where to start with self help

- An opportunity to share amongst their peers, exploring stregnths and weaknesses

    Identified a need.

- To provide a small resource they can use or have access to if they need it at the end.

- I want my students to enjoy their study journey with a better experience

- Possibly avoiding drop outs

Science in the News. (2020). A Stressful New Decade: The latest information on how stress shapes our minds and bodies. [online] Available at: https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/a-stressful-new-decade-the-latest-information-on-how-stress-shapes-our-minds-and-bodies/.

Aivaz, K.A. and Teodorescu, D. (2022). College Students' Distractions from Learning Caused by Multitasking in Online vs. Face-to-Face Classes: A Case Study at a Public University in Romania. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(18), p.11188. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811188.
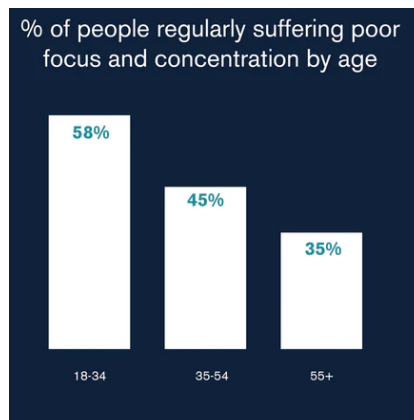
Rationale continued
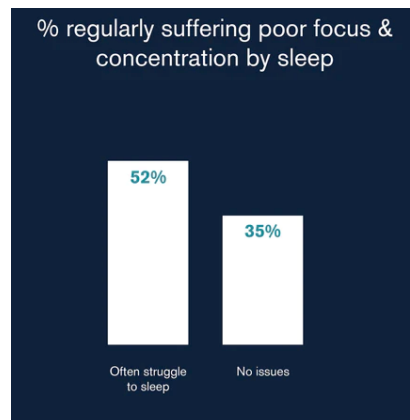
Additional findings

Research by DR.VEGAN shows nearly 50% of people regularly have problems focusing and concentrating.

The biggest % was the 18-34 year olds, where most of the students sit

% of people regularly suffering poor focus and concentration by age

58% (18-34), 45% (35-54), 35% (55+)

Data from Drvegan.com

% regularly suffering poor focus & concentration by sleep

52% (Often struggle to sleep), 35% (No issues)

Mental Health & Wellbeing in 2023

Anxiety — INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING AT LEAST MILD SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY — 60%

Stress — INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING MODERATE TO HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS — 76%

Depression — INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING AT LEAST MILD SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION — 56%

Data from Champion Health. Sample size: 4170 individuals.

Data from Champion health sample sized 4170

drvegan.com. (n.d.). Why do 50% of us struggle to focus & concentrate? – DR.VEGAN. [online] Available at: https://drvegan.com/blogs/articles/why-do-50-of-us-struggle-to-focus-and-concentrate. (accessed 13/01/2024)

InnerDrive (n.d.). Why are students so easily distracted? [online] blog.innerdrive.co.uk. Available at: https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/why-are-students-distracted. (accessed 13/01/2024)

Qualitative data Analysis

Thematic Analysis steps taken from Braun and Clarke's research methods

Step 1:
I Familiarised my self with content Transcribed recordings and read through the data, collecting notes to extract information.

Step 2:
Coded the data highlighting into themes and categories

Step 3:
I applied themes, I looked for key phrases and words that kept recurring

www.thematicanalysis.net. (n.d.). About us | Thematic Analysis. [online] Available at: https://www.thematicanalysis.net/who-we-are/. (Accessed 31/12/2023
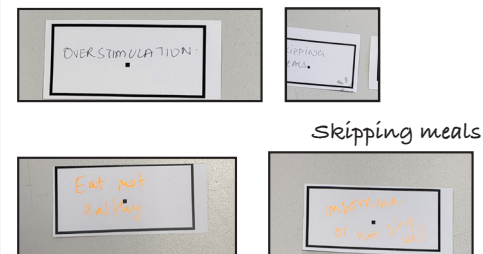
Deductive coding =
Begin with a set of pre established words

Inductive coding =
Create sets of words based on the data I found

Also allowed their own themes and data

Skipping meals

Results and main findings

Frequency Table

Struggles and challenges effecting Focus		

Stressed	••	2
Always Hungry	•••	3
Need a clean environment	•••••	5
Mental Blocks	•••••	5
Distractions	••	2
Meditation	•	1
Too many tasks/over worked	•••••	5
Procrastination	•••	3
Lazy/Motivation	••	2
Emotional wellbeing	••	2
Anxiety	•	1
Physical health	•	1
Lack of sleep	••	2
Physical wellbeing	••	2
Lack of sunlight	••••	4
Working from bed	•	1
Too many tabs open	•	1
Being organised	•••	3
Learning new software	•	1
Burn Out	•••	3
Family Trouble	•	1
Busy living environment	•	1
Poor eating habits	•••	3
Planning/Tasks list	•••	3

Popular evidence from observation Majority was calculated by 3 or more	Followed by Majority was calculated by 2
Need a clean environment Always Hungry Mental Blocks Lack of sunlight Burn Out Being organised Procrastination Poor eating habits Planning/Tasks list	Stressed Distractions Lazy/ Motivation Emotional wellbeing Lack of sleep

Everyone said there were interested in an intervention and took part in helping to populate it

Contribution and Suggestions

I reccommended strategies for building new habbits

- Make lists

  Our brain loves ordered tasks Zeigarnik, B (1920)
  To-do lists serve as a reminder

  for what you need to accomplish

- Tidy your areas

  A clean and organized environment fosters a sense of calm, reduces stress, and improves focus, while clutter and

  disarray can lead to feelings of chaos and anxiety

- Access Stevens Kotler
  4 stages of Flow (blog)

  The cycle of Flow, Steven Kotler explains that we go through in order to get into flow (performing at your best)

- Completing low energy tasks

- Mind mapping

- Listening to music/quiet

- Time balancing

GoodTherapy (2016). Zeigarnik Effect. [online] GoodTherapy.org Therapy Blog. Available at: https://www. goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/zeigarnik-effect.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience. New York: Harper and Row.

Reflection

- This is an important area in a students life

- The students were open and honest

- This was the first time I ran a focus group

- I could relate to some of these struggles

- Additional support would have been a bounus to help collect data

- Have a back up person just in case one cancels

Evaluation

- Students either need a relationship/ connection to attened your groups

  It has to work with their schedules/timings

  Not before the Christmas break or a big hand in

- Payments or incentives needed and work well

- Need a3 to 6 months catch up with students after

- Ask them if they had any questions for me as the researchwr
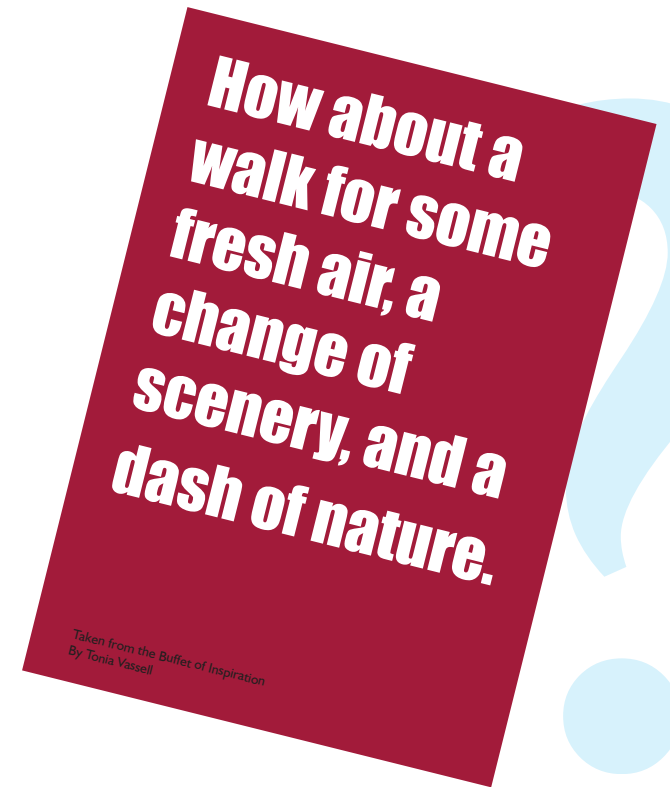
- Have they improved personally at all.

To define social justice

The A7 Resources/Solution

'The Buffet of Inspiration'

This can be presented at the start of their course

A fair chance to thrive academically.

How about a walk for some fresh air, a change of scenery, and a dash of nature.

Taken from the Buffet of Inspiration
By Tonia Vassell

The Buffet of Inspiration
Managing Yourself

by: Tonia Vassell

Reference list

References:

About (2016) *Action-Based Research Methods*. (online) https://activistresearchmethods.wordpress.com/about/. (Accessed 05/12/2024)

Aivaz, K.A. and Teodorescu, D. (2022). College Students' Distractions from Learning Caused by Multitasking in Online vs. Face-to-Face Classes: A Case Study at a Public University in Romania. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(18), p.11188. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811188 (Accessed 31/12/2023)

Anon, (2023). *No. 1 University Stress Management: How Floatation Therapy Can Help Students Succeed.* [online] Available at: https://www.timetofloat.co.uk/university-stress-management [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Atchley, P (2010.) *You Can't Multitask, So Stop Trying* (online) https://hbr.org/2010/12/you-cant-multi-task-so-stop-tr (Accessed 23/12/2023)

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. 1st ed. London: Sage. Successful-Qualitative-Research-a-practical-guide-for-beginnersDownload

British Educational Research Association (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition (2018)*. [online] Bera.ac.uk. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018 (Accessed 01/Aug/2023)

BYJUS Blog. (n.d.). *How to Improve Concentration: 5 Useful Tips to Get You Focused*. [online] Available at: https://blog.byjus.com/the-learning-tree/exam-tips-motivation/how-to-improve-concentration/ (Accessed 01/Aug/2023)

Caitlin, T. *How to use The Pomodoro Technique* (online) https://www.taracaitlin.com/pomodoro-technique-to-increase-productivity/ (Accessed 28/12/2023)

canadacollege.edu. (n.d.). *Attention and Concentration strategies | Disability Resource Center | Cañada College*. [online] Available at: https://canadacollege.edu/disabilityresourcecenter/attention.php (Accessed 13/01/2024)

Caulfield, J. (2022). *How to Do Thematic Analysis | Guide & Examples*. [online] Scribbr. Available at: https://www.scribbr.co.uk/research-methods/thematic-analysis-explained/

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

drvegan.com. (n.d.). Why do 50% of us struggle to focus & concentrate? – DR.VEGAN. [online] Available at: https://drvegan.com/blogs/articles/why-do-50-of-us-struggle-to-focus-and-concentrate *(accessed 13/01/2024)*

Farheen Gani (2017). *Top 10 Strategies for Learning New Skills*. [online] Zapier. Available at: https://zapier.com/blog/learning-new-skills/ [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024]

Flow Research Collective (2022). *How To Get More Flow By Understanding The Four Stage Cycle with Steven Kotler*. *YouTube*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwIGNNv-SNQ (Accessed 28/12/2023)

Gonzalez, J. (2018). *6 Powerful Learning Strategies You MUST Share with Students | Cult of Pedagogy*. [online] Cult of Pedagogy. Available at: https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/learning-strategies/

GoodTherapy (2016). Zeigarnik Effect. [online] GoodTherapy.org Therapy Blog. Available at: https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/zeigarnik-effect

How To Get Into The Flow State | Steven Kotler. (2019). *YouTube*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG_hNZ5T4nY. (Accessed 29/12/2023)

How to Upload PDF Files to Your WordPress Site (online) Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raUG8H01YHg (Accessed: 29 December 2023).

Illing, S. (2016). *There's a war for your attention. And you're probably losing it.* [online] Vox. Available at: https://www.vox.com/conversations/2016/11/17/13477142/facebook-twitter-social-media-attention-merchants [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024]

InnerDrive (n.d.). Why are students so easily distracted? [online] blog.innerdrive.co.uk. Available at: https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/why-are-students-distracted *(accessed 13/01/2024)*

Jansen, D. (2021). *What Is Thematic Analysis? Explainer + Examples*. [online] Grad Coach. Available at: https://gradcoach.com/what-is-thematic-analysis/ (Accessed 28/12/2023)

Kember, D., NG, S., TSE, H., Wong, E.T.T. and Pomfret, M. (1996). An examination of the interrelationships between workload, study time, learning approaches and academic outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 21(3), pp.347–358. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079612331381261 [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024]

Kwon, D. (2022). The rise of citational justice: how scholars are making references fairer. Nature, [online] 603(7902), pp.568–571. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00793-1 (Accessed 28/12/2023)

Luxafor. (2016). *Pomodoro Technique - a Time Management Life Hack*. [online] Available at: https://luxafor.co.uk/pomodoro-technique-time-management-life-hack/. (Accessed 29/12/2023)

NHS (2022). *5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing*. [online] NHS. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/ [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024]

Principe, L. (2022). *7 Interactive Focus Group Activities for Better Engagement*. [online] CivicomMRS. Available at: https://www.civicommrs.com/7-interactive-focus-group-activities-for-better-engagement/ (Accessed 31/12/2023)

Science in the News. (2020). *A Stressful New Decade: The latest information on how stress shapes our minds and bodies*. [online] Available at: https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/a-stressful-new-decade-the-latest-information-on-how-stress-shapes-our-minds-and-bodies/ (Accessed 13/12/2023)

The Learning Scientists. (n.d.). *Downloadable Materials*. [online] Available at: https://www.learningscientists.org/downloadable-materials/ [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024]

The Learning Scientists. (n.d.). *Posters*. [online] Available at: https://www.learningscientists.org/posters [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024]

Wikipedia Contributors (2019). *Flow (psychology)*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_(psychology). (Accessed 29/12/2023)

Willis, R. (2018). The use of composite narratives to present interview findings. *Qualitative Research*, 19(4), pp.471–480. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1468794118787711 (Accessed 13/09/2023)

www.structural-learning.com. (n.d.). *Strategies to promote student wellbeing*. [online] Available at: https://www.structural-learning.com/post/strategies-to-promote-student-wellbeing [Accessed 13 Jan. 2024]

www.thematicanalysis.net. (n.d.). *About us | Thematic Analysis*. [online] Available at: https://www.thematicanalysis.net/who-we-are/ (Accessed 31/12/2023)

www.tremendous.com. (2023). *Do research incentives increase participation? | Tremendous*. [online] Available at: https://www.tremendous.com/blog/do-research-incentives-actually-increase-participation/ (Accessed 13/01/2024)

www.youtube.com. (n.d.). *How to Transcribe Audio to Text in Microsoft Word*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxQvsCBpNAw [Accessed 13 Jan. 2024].

Thanks for listening
Q & A