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## How to Accelerate Your Ability to Learn - The Education Sector Can Teach You How

In October last year we reported, “80% of future economic growth is dependent on the quality of education. It is by far the most important lever our society can pull to ensure our future success.” Extending on this we wrote, “Learning and development programs can deliver real growth and success for any organisation.”

Similarly, on Wednesday, the Sydney Morning Herald published, [“Science directly contributes \\$145b to GDP”](#) and it was reported that 'new' knowledge is “the dominant factor driving economic growth over the long term in developed countries.” The research also warned that, “without ongoing increases in human knowledge, including technical progress, any of the other factors driving economic growth will eventually encounter diminishing returns, and growth will slow.”

It is clear just how critical education and new knowledge is but as we have written in the past most [learning programs fail](#). And while we have also written about how to avoid the common pitfalls that derail learning and development programs, it has been reassuring to discover that many of success factors, critical in the work environment are also common to the Education sector.

A new study from the [NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation](#) entitled, *What Works Best*, correlates closely with the factors that drive success in work environments.

1. Teachers have high expectations of their students – research shows that NAPLAN reading scores for year 9 students were as much as 40 points higher in classrooms where teachers had high expectations for their students and their work. As we wrote in [How to Turn Your Organisation Around](#), it is critical that new goals are set to ‘raise-the-bar’ and that higher standards are defined for the organisation and for peoples’ performance. Also necessary is that students are challenged and encouraged to do their best.
2. Engagement is critical – students who are engaged learn more effectively. As we have discussed in numerous pieces, including, [Engagement – Lessons for Leaders](#), employees who are engaged demonstrate greater discretionary effort, make less mistakes and perform some 20% than peers.
3. Emphasis on the happiness and wellbeing of students – this drives academic outcomes but also results in students with better mental health and who go on to live more responsible lifestyles. This is no different to what our society must strive to create and what we are working with our clients to develop:



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- Resilience – being able to respond effectively to challenging situations
- Well-being – to be able to flourish and feel positive about yourself
- Adaptability – to keep learning and to respond positively to change

Building on this, I recently watched a great TED Talk from one of my favourite thinkers, Simon Sinek, who said great leaders make you feel safe - that when people feel that leaders have their backs then co-operation and trust is engendered; people will strive harder and will achieve more. Quite simply, people will work harder and tend to overachieve.

4. Feedback on assignments and assessments is paramount - research continually finds that this is one of the most powerful influences on student achievement. In our workshops, we say that fair and accurate feedback from a knowledgeable source is the most effective performance management lever available to an organisation. Even more so, research from the University of Alberta found that even the 'thought' that students were going to receive feedback was enough to make them strive harder and improve their performance.
5. Explicit teaching, where teachers make clear what they expect their students to do. We believe that this is one of the fundamental pillars of engagement and performance but that most organisations are not effective at articulating expectations. Further, we have found that when asked, most workers do not fully understand what is required of them.

In the Education sector, being clear about the purpose of what students are learning and the tasks they are performing has been found to result in significantly higher reading scores than peers who did not understand the importance of what they were learning.

John Hattie, the Professor of Education at Auckland University, suggests learning occurs best when learning is the explicit goal, when students show self-regulatory attributes such as self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, and self-teaching. Again mirroring success factors at work, I wrote to a client yesterday that the aim of any learning program should be to create a continuous learning loop where people self-regulate their own behaviour and become responsible for their own improvement.



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