

Can we get personal?

It's the end of the holidays. You've enjoyed a few weeks off and unfortunately, the sun, sea and sand of the last month is soon to be a distant memory as you move forward into September and prepare for the latest UCAS cohort to begin their applications.



Sorry, to bring you back down to earth with a UCAS bump. But if you put your Pina Colada down for a moment, there is a way that Kloodle can help.

Every year, I try to refine the process and subsequently create an ever-growing list of dos and don'ts for newbie applicants. The form filling is only the first hurdle. 'What does Student Support Arrangements mean?' 'What is my fee code?' 'It's not showing the course I want at the institution I want to go to' And so it continues. In my case,

75 times over. And just when you start to see the finish line on the horizon, you hear the dreaded words 'Personal Statement' muttered and know that you're back at square one.



This year though, I have done something different.

And it has made the whole process significantly easier.

I've used Kloodle.

Kloodle

College is a transitional time for many. School has finished and students have their results. Some are happy - some disappointed. But they come to college ready for a change. No uniform. No bells. No 'having' to study a subject you don't

like. It heralds a fresh start, a clean slate. The start of their Kloodle profile.

Students were informed at the start of their first year that they had to stay on top of their Kloodle profiles because it was the only way that they could **prove** all of the claims that they would be making 12 months down the line when making a UCAS, apprenticeship or employment application. Students were responsible for updating Kloodle with their activities, work experience and voluntary work as proof of their involvement, interests and extension activities. If it wasn't on Kloodle, I wasn't prepared to support it and I certainly wasn't going to discuss it on my reference.



We had an epiphany!

In using Kloodle, students started to write their Personal Statement from day 1. Their bio acted as a scaffold to start the writing process. Their top 3 achievements had already been prioritised and provided me with points to refer to in my reference. Blogs, photos and documents provided a ready source of



evidence to support the student's interest in a course. No longer did I read, 'I have long been fascinated by [insert subject]' or 'I have a genuine passion (how I hate this word!) for ...' as students could prove their claim and write confidently, evidencing their subject interest without making grandiose and subsequently, naïve claims, that made admission tutors and recruiters sigh in frustration.

At key intervals throughout the year, we revisited Kloodle profiles - usually following key college calendar events. Skills' weeks, enrichment week and key assessment weeks all provided a rich source of activities for blogging and skills'



tagging. Regular updates following subject support and extension classes gave students time to reflect on their learning and catalogue their extra reading to evidence their industry and reward their enthusiasm. Work experience and relevant enterprise was evaluated and skills discussed through a meaningful, retrospective lens.

And by the end of the first year, students had full profiles. There was no last minute panic or frantic activities taking place. There was a reassuring absence of blank faces when students were questioned about their skill-set and how these had been exhibited. There were no ultimatums when requesting the submission of Personal Statements. Students were proactive throughout the year and understood the concept of creating a professional Kloodle profile.

Students were prepared.



Staff were confident.

The process had improved.

Are you Ofsted ready?



Ofsted is education's 'Macbeth'.
ever closer.

Whispering the word lures inspection

Muttering those two syllables draws inspectors through the door.

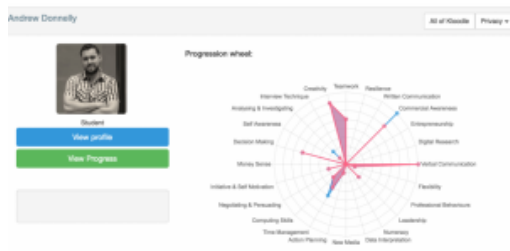


We've all read the CIF. It has dominated management teams' agendas up and down the country. We understand value added, ALPS and Progress 8 data. We've updated Teaching, Learning and Assessment and stretched the most inflexible of learners. We're ready to be scrutinised on outcomes. We know destinations and we can discuss our students' employability and how they're ready to progress.

Or are we?

Are you ready to...

- print off meaningful overviews of your **students' work ready profiles?**



- provide **skills' data to measure impact?**
- **quantify the work experience hours** your students have been involved in?
- demonstrate that students have **reflected on their work experience** and are able to discuss their developing skill-set?

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, it's time to consider Kloodle.

Kloodle resembles an on-line Record of Achievement. Students construct a CV throughout their academic journey. On Kloodle, students cannot declare they possess a skill without 'proving it'. Pupil A reckons they're organised and time-efficient? They must upload content to demonstrate the fact.



All good so far?



Every time a student **creates a piece of evidence** or **demonstrates a skill** or **details their experiences of work**, it's recorded. Each time a skill is recorded, it creates data.

Quantifiable data. This measures outcomes and determines the value you have added to a student. You can now demonstrate a cohort's work experience at the click of a button. You can quantify the students who have recorded 'teamwork' or 'self motivation'.

Since November, my class of 21 have uploaded 18 blogs and 9 pictures to capture teamwork and 16 blogs, 11 photos and 4 videos to validate verbal communication. They've also notched up 112 hours of work-related experience. Blog writing supports and reflects upon these activities. Since September, our college of 1095 boasts 1011 hours of work experience, 876 blogs describing written communication and 794 blogs tagging creativity.

Data isn't generated magically. It requires quality input. Kloodle must be embedded into your culture. It must be part of the daily language and routine. Our Skills' Weeks have stimulated discussion regarding employability. As a consequence, the data suite shows a surge in student recording and reflection.



Back to the 'O' word.



How do you currently record your own students' employability skills?

Young people don't have enough problems

Well, all right then, young people today do have lots of problems, we don't mean to trivialise the challenges facing them, but exposure to activities which develop crucial problem solving skills is limited.

The Victorians built the foundations for our education system. The world was a different place back then with different expectations. Employers required vastly different skills than they do today. Consequently, we base tests on [rote-learning](#) of facts. We then expect students to regurgitate the facts (otherwise known as 'GCSEs') or tackle questions by clumping facts together in a coherent way (known as 'A levels'). Examiners frame questions to expect a 'right' answer. Anything less is 'wrong'. It's binary.



The system is outdated and isn't preparing our students for the [world of work](#). Business rarely has a right answer. We make compromises for the 'best' solution. In the digital age, a rote knowledge of facts isn't required either. University

undergraduates told me recently that the bedrock of facts for their essays is Wikipedia. If you need information or a fact, then google it. Rote memorisation is for losers!

[Futurists](#) say the working world will consist of people who instruct computers what to do, and others who carry out a computer's instructions. No prizes for guessing who will earn the most (the programmers..save yourself the googling). The UK may have plummeted down the [global education league tables](#), but

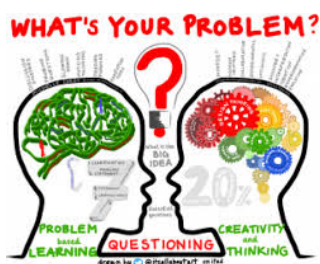


countries nearer the top also have issues. In the BBC documentary School Swap: Korea Style, even though the students obtain phenomenal exam results, it comes at a price. One cost is the associated mental health issues of the pressure of exam performance and the other is the lack of

['communication, collaboration and creativity'](#) it instils. I have been to Singapore many times and can vouch for this. The students excelled in computational tasks. *Asking challenging questions of clients or devising a strategy to win business*, proved difficult. "We just don't do this" they would say.

Enter Problem Based Learning, or PBL.

Howard Barrow, the founder of [PBL](#), defined it as 'a learning method based on



the principle of using problems as a starting point for the acquisition and integration of new knowledge.' Medicine and other sciences utilised the methods first in education. Other subjects are breathing down their necks. PBL steers away from knowledge, cognitive skills and the rote-learning of facts which was more valuable in the pre-internet age.

Instead it focuses on a [higher level skills](#) of *analysis, evaluation and synthesis*. By working in a team you learn how to *consider multiple perspectives, collaborate* and appreciate how to *compromise*.

There are millions of examples which could be used as PBL. It can be tasks, case studies, projects, essays, whatever results in the experience of active learning, skills applicable to the real world. A couple of essay style question examples include:

Is war ever justified?

How can an election candidate effectively persuade voters to elect him/her?

These questions are very difficult to answer. Ask Hillary Clinton! Formal schooling would have you believe that there is a right answer, however, there are no correct answers to these problems. There rarely is. Students must argue the best solution for the circumstances. They have to learn to *listen* to different viewpoints, *formulate arguments* and *support* them, be 'realistic', reflect and then be able to *present* and *articulate* views.



Students must base their solution on probabilities and *comprehension*, with facts used in support of arguments. A solution



often involves a compromise and an understanding of how to *use resources*. Business requires these skills and PBL gives students the opportunity to develop them. It's about being pragmatic and making decisions and it is a paradigm shift away from traditional 'chalk and talk' teaching. The teacher adopts the role of mentor or facilitator in PBL. The process instils an attitude of *self directed lifelong learning*. It abhors spoon-feeding by a teacher.

Problem solving is tough. The earlier you start in life then the easier it becomes. It develops into a way of life. There was less of a requirement for PBL 30 years ago. Life generally (and university in particular) had lots of 'PBL' activities. 'Back in the day' finding accommodation involved traipsing round lots of flats waiting in a queue of 50 other students. Nowadays, two clicks on the relevant website suffices. In lectures, there were no powerpoint slides to read, just illegible scribbles on a blackboard by a professor of no name. Arranging to meet friends was a major logistical exercise. If you arranged to meet 'down the pub' at 8 o'clock, there was no WhatsApp to check your friends would be there or to tell them of a change of plan. You'd all have to honour the commitment.



However, this way of life was great practice at PBL or 'sorting things out'. You wouldn't wish it on anyone but a childhood riddled with problems can bear fruit later on. There's a very strong correlation between successful people and [losing a parent](#), particularly a father, early in life. If you come from an [immigrant family](#) which moved to the UK when you were a young child and you couldn't speak English, there are lots of obstacles to overcome. You have to sink or swim. Those that swim, swim very hard. Avoiding sinking can give you incredible 'drive'. It means that you have to get on and become the bread-winner, the problem solver. Getting used to *making decisions* is a critical skill. Whether the decision turns out to be right or wrong, good or bad, it doesn't matter, it just makes you *resilient*.



More and more universities are incorporating PBL into their curricula as a way of preparing students for the world of work (and life in general). The problem is that they are academic institutions with no requirement to offer this and also approaches are inconsistent. Universities like Maastricht in Holland have rolled out PBL across the whole university, whereas it is non-existent in some institutions.



In the UK, there are only a few qualifications which incorporate some of these



skills. The closest in school qualifications is the [Extended Project Qualification](#) (EPQ), which involves having to *research* a topic of your choice and *write* an extended essay on the subject followed by a *presentation* of the main findings. Another example is the accountancy bodies introduced practical case studies as part of the final qualification rather than exams as it was felt they were more in keeping with a real-life scenario and the problems of dealing with clients.

At Kloodle, we are helping students think about and build employability and life skills (in italics above) from an early age. In fact, we believe the earlier the better. Woodhey High School will use Kloodle with their year 7 to 11s. Students can start to think about what skills they need for the careers they want to pursue and have the self-awareness of how they can evidence their skills. Kloodle is not a separate exercise or lesson from normal activities, it forms an 'integral part' of lessons. For example, a group activity incorporated in a maths class demonstrates teamwork just as effectively as a Saturday kick around on the football pitch. Students develop their teamwork skills during the lesson. Students learn to equate their daily activities with skill acquisition. Each day is an improvement of one skill or another. Kloodle records this journey and development, teaching young people to evaluate their skills and define them for a potential employer. Problem based learning presents more opportunities to develop these skills. We think the mindset required to tackle problems and surmount them is a fantastic approach to education and one which enables the development of skills employers value highly.



[How the National Numeracy is](#)

helping student employability

A few weeks ago, we noticed students from Farnborough Sixth Form College posting pictures of a particular certificate to their Kloodle profile.



The certificate was an award received from the National [Numeracy Challenge](#). The students were proving their mathematical capabilities via this certificate on their profile. Employers bemoan a [lack of numeracy](#) amongst young people, so the proactive steps Farnborough Sixth Form's students were taking to address this was commendable.



Shortly after these posts, National Numeracy emailed us. They had run sessions with Farnborough students and witnessed them uploading pictures of their certificates to Kloodle. Intrigued, they got in touch to find out more.



The National Numeracy is a charity dedicated to improving numeracy in the UK. They work with a range of ages, from

school pupils to adults. Maths evokes a strong feeling amongst many people. Their perception is often shaped by their school experiences. A negative experience can have far reaching consequences. Some parents still experience angst at the mention of the word "[maths](#)". The National Numeracy caters for their worries as well as those of students.

The charity recognises that practical numeracy impacts daily life. From being able to determine the total of your shopping bill to working out the length of curtains to purchase for the top window, numbers are a daily requirement. School exams contain maths which can appear irrelevant. Practical applications are often glossed over and context is lost. National Numeracy concentrate on practical maths we can use to help with our [daily activities](#).

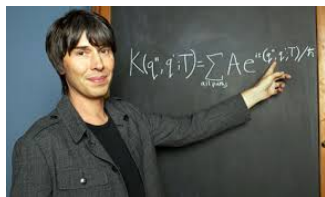


Their mantra resonates with Kloodle. One belief they have is that "improvement takes effort and application; The key to numeracy skill is resilience and development". We share this core belief. Excelling at anything requires dedication and practice. These are also key requirements for success in life. We love the fact that National Numeracy doesn't dress up improving your maths as an easy endeavour. They recognise it takes courage and grit. We think this skill applies to any of life's pursuits. They also highlight the importance of a positive attitude. People's approach to maths often creates a [glass ceiling](#) for performance. This is true in all aspects of skill



acquisition. If you believe you are terrible at something, you are right no matter what the reality really is. National Numeracy wants to develop people's confidence with maths, increasing effectiveness in the process.

Professor Brian Cox calculates speeds of minute particles flying around the Large



Hadron Collider. Simon Cowell looks at viewer ratings and vote numbers for X Factor. Top marketers calculate the engagement and reach of their posts on social media. Even Wayne Rooney has to count the number of goals he scores each season. Calculating his earnings over the course of a

year is somewhat more problematic. Developing confidence with practical maths can have a multiplier effect on your career. Your increased ability and effectiveness will translate to better performance and [better pay](#). We recommend you look at National Numeracy's programmes. They have something for everyone. Whilst you're at it, remember to document your new found skill on Kloodle.