

## **Developing a curriculum for recovery: embracing self-regulated learning and metacognition**

POUNTNEY, Richard <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5672-0811>>

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## Developing a curriculum for recovery: embracing self-regulated learning and metacognition

Richard Pountney

An approach to developing the curriculum that has been shown to have impact on learning is metacognition and self-regulated learning (Muijs and Bokhove, 2020). Defined, simply, as developing pupils' ability to monitor, direct, and review their learning by teaching them to set goals, and to evaluate their own learning, metacognition and self-regulation (MSR) is rated by the EEF Teaching Toolkit as "high impact", with pupils making on average seven months of additional progress on attainment, for very low cost (Quigley, Muijs, and Stringer, 2018). Having metacognitive knowledge coupled with the ability to use metacognitive skills is seen as a very effective way of predicting successful learning and that metacognition is central to improving learning outcomes across age ranges and across school subjects (Perry, et al., 2019).

The case for MSR was amplified In March 2020 when schools in England partially closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (CV19), with exceptions for on-site education for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. The disruption to schools took the form of two lockdowns, as partial closures of schools, with 47% of children attending in the first lockdown (March 2020), compared to the second (January 2021) where only 8% of secondary age children attended school (Montacute and Cullinane, 2021). Especially impactful on pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 (in the UK system), as crucial stages for future study and employment, the resultant levels of anxiety and stress (Prabu, 2015) are high, even in normal circumstances. Here, contact with school, regular lessons and a routine of study are key in order to offset negative thinking and to reassure the student (ibid., p. 68). Furthermore, the effects of disruption caused by the pandemic, can be seen as traumatic in children's lives, requiring trauma-informed approaches (Thomas, Crosby and Vanderhaar, 2019) that provide children with the opportunity to reflect on experiences and have their responses heard and validated in order to re-engage and learn.

The UK government's response to the restrictions to schooling came later in October 2020, setting up the £350 million flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP): "... to support children left behind academically by disruption of the coronavirus pandemic". Questions have been raised about the focus of NTP on, predominantly, subject tutoring, and on mentoring in groups, contrary to the evidence that one-to-one tuition is more effective, delivering approximately five additional months' progress on average, with effects on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds tending to be particularly positive (EEF, 2018).

### **The GROW Programme and curriculum**

The GROW programme was devised as intervention for 15–18-year-old pupils who were unable to attend school for periods during the 14 months up to June 2021. This intervention was devised by schools and a team at a university in South Yorkshire, England, and comprised the GROW Programme (<https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/grow>) of focused, online mentoring for pupils by recent graduates, either at home or on return to school (Pountney, 2023). This is an example of a rapid, self-funded, mainly free-to-schools response, delivered in June 2020, within 10 weeks of the first lockdown.

As a collaboration between Sheffield Hallam University and schools in the four regions of South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham) during the first (partial) lockdown of schools the programme led to the development of a curriculum for recovery and a programme for

training mentors. The mutual benefits included employment for recent graduates unable to find work during the pandemic, schools having to engage pupils who were mostly learning from home, and catch-up in learning for pupils, at a key stage of their education.

The decision to provide mentoring online was pragmatic, reflecting those made globally during the pandemic. The platform chosen was Bramble (<https://about.bramble.io/>), a system designed for one-to-one tutoring with features that include real-time collaboration on screen, and the use of microphone and video for the participants to interact. Another plus for using Bramble was the need for sessions to be recorded for safeguarding reasons, and for this recording to be available for review by teachers.

Each of the 12 mentoring sessions lasted one hour, and took place online in Bramble, at a time agreed with the school. To date over 700 pupils from 31 schools have received a total of over 5000 hours of online mentoring by 70 graduate mentors. The evaluation of the programme (cf. Pountney, 2023) showed that the pupils re-engaged with school following disruption, with 82% feeling this was helpful or very helpful. The activities and materials were seen to contribute to help pupils develop positive habits of work and learning (88%) and to help them with their future learning and career (90.6%). This perception was even higher (94%) for the effectiveness of the mentoring activities in helping pupils with their own personal development.

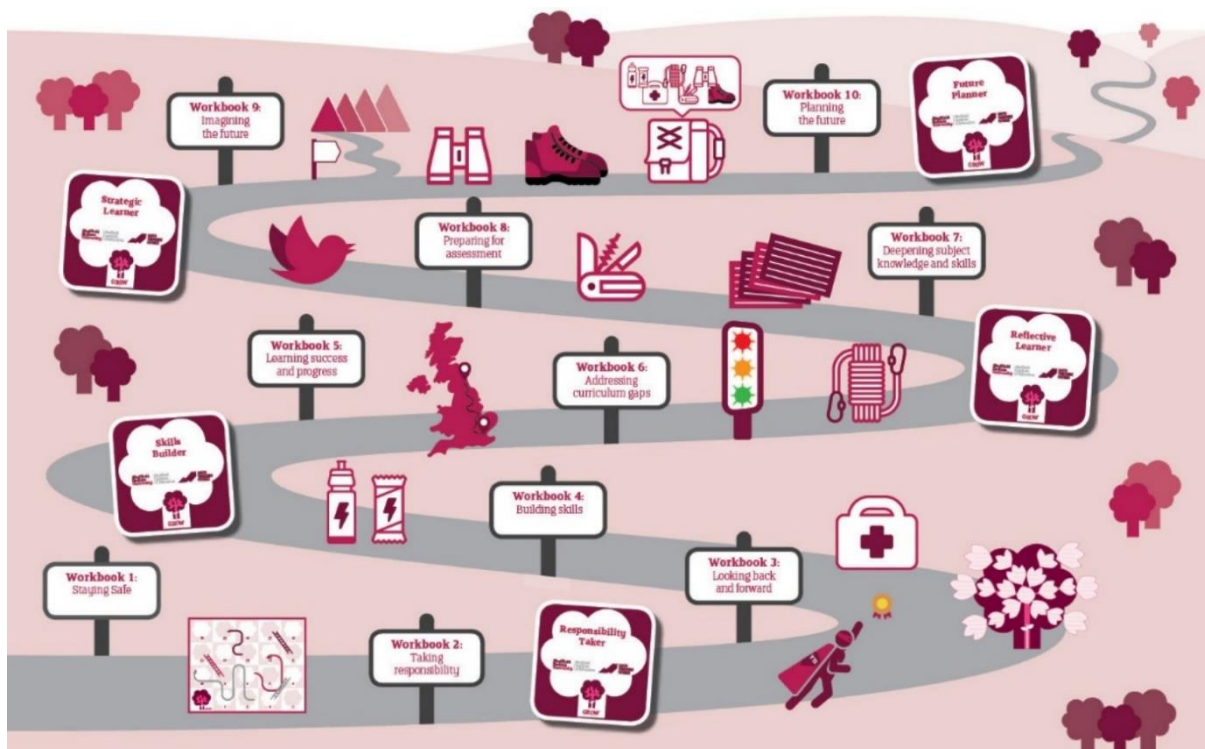


Figure 1: Curriculum map of the GROW programme

### Effects on pupils and schooling

The GROW Programme, as a curricular attempt to repair the disruption to schooling brought about by CV19, made visible the tensions in how the pupil encounters schooling. Mentoring strategies that address pupils' metacognition and self-regulation are seen as offering effective ways of (re-)establishing and strengthening connection to learning and to the school context. The emphasis here is on hope, on resilient systems (OECD, 2019), and on maintaining the momentum of collective emergency action for a curriculum that can recover the purpose of learning and of schooling itself.

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