

## Entrepreneurial Case Studies

### Case Study 5: Yale College



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#### **Key Feature**

A holistic approach to enterprise that is fully supported by a whole series of external learning opportunities linked to contextual and practical activities, creating a seamless programme where the Welsh Baccalaureate, the vocational curriculum and entrepreneurship become fully integrated.

#### **Background Information**

Yale College is a further education tertiary college in Wales with approximately 3,300 full-time, 8,000 part-time and 1,000 work-based learners in the age ranges 14-85 and 36,000 enrolments situated in Wrexham town centre.

Yale won the Overall Wales Quality Award in 2008 and is the only College in Wales accorded five star excellence in European Framework for Quality Management 2009 (EFQM).

The College has been awarded with the highest work-based learning inspection results in Wales (2008) gaining 11 grade ones with 28 examples of outstanding practice. Yale College was ranked outstanding and good in all areas by Estyn (2009).

It has around 630 staff (full-time/part-time) and an annual income of circa £25m. The curriculum portfolio at Yale is extremely broad and provides for all learners at every level from Entry to Level 5. Apart from the traditional FE and work-based curriculum, it includes Welsh Baccalaureate courses, 14-16 taster and vocational pathways in partnership with local schools and some higher education courses in partnership with Glyndŵr University.

The college's mission is to "provide all learners with the highest quality education and training, foster partnerships and contribute to the social and economic development of Wrexham and the wider community".

There have been two main drivers for the development of enterprise and entrepreneurship across all aspects of the College's life. The first is the Welsh Government's Youth Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Strategy for Wales (YES) -

“We see the development of entrepreneurship skills, values and attitudes as part of a lifelong continuum of learning essential to a young person’s experiences, from school through college and university into working life” - with a key action to “embed entrepreneurship and enterprise within curriculum development in FE and HE.” All FE Colleges have been in receipt of funding to support the delivery of this objective.

The second is the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Work related learning is one of the core components of the Baccalaureate and includes ‘working with an employer’ and ‘team enterprise’.

### **Instilling enterprise and entrepreneurship across the organisation**

The college has an Enterprise Champion funded in part through YES. Her role has been to facilitate and encourage faculties and departments to introduce and embed enterprise into their curriculum and their working practices. The secret to the success of the model is that it has not been prescriptive – she has worked with colleagues to show how the key drivers for enterprise and entrepreneurship are relevant to all subject/vocational areas, not just business studies. The seeds are now sown in all areas of the college’s provision. However, two particular areas illustrate a truly innovative approach – Catering and Hospitality and Art, Media and Design.

### **Enterprising approaches to business development and income generation**

When moving into new restaurant and kitchen facilities three years ago, the new Catering and Hospitality Manager saw this as an opportunity to develop an area that not only served the needs of the students but also served the needs of the community and local employers. The traditional way of developing catering in the college had been to support learners through NVQs but providing little more for the learners than their NVQ framework.

A study into the skills needs of learners at the college found that catering and hospitality students often had very poor previous achievements in English and maths, and often had multiple skills needs including issues of self-esteem and concentration. The department also had a history of poor retention, attainment and progression from level one, with historically around 62% success rate, which was well below college average success rates, and had been identified by the college as an area for quality improvement. The catering department also recognised that the learners in their area often had many needs associated with the social context of learning, and that the curriculum for these learners needed to be radically changed to serve these learners more effectively.

In order to do this the department decided to change its practices and run the course as a fully commercial catering operation. In the last three years the department has worked incredibly hard to build up a sizeable and diverse catering business, with learners in charge of all key business processes from client meetings to event organisation and delivery. This business includes catering off

site (using a specially purchased refrigerated van) and the catering can take many different forms from small private fine dining dinner parties, to large functions, and even weddings. All these diverse events enable the learners to get a realistic and deep understanding of the catering industry in all its forms. As part of the business the [Rendezvous Restaurant](#) at college has also been developed into a very popular busy commercial restaurant open and used extensively by the general public.

The department has also worked hard with local employers, the council and businesses to become the hub of the catering industry in the local economy. In return, the College has chefs coming in to college to work with the learners and give them a flavour of the pressures of a commercial kitchen. In order to further enrich the learners' experience of the catering industry, artisans are regularly invited to demonstrate their traditional crafts and skills, working with the learners to introduce them to highly skilled and increasingly specialised crafts such as butchery, charcuterie and confectionary. These all give the learners opportunities far above and beyond the standard catering courses and creates aspirations for learners to consider the broad range of opportunities available to them in the catering industry.

The catering and hospitality department is also effectively harnessing new technologies to enhance the learning experiences for students, in particular mobile technologies which the learners really respond positively too. The department has piloted the use of pod-casting through the year. All learners have used i-pod touches and their mobile phones to receive video pod-casts of the cooking techniques they are learning at college. These act as short demonstrations and allow the learners to practice their techniques in the work place and between classes. Learners can see techniques close up and view on demand in any location.

The college is also part of a new enterprise that has found a unique way to bring local produce to the consumer and celebrate the fine food of its region thanks to an innovative new website that is one of the first of its kind in the UK for a local council, college, internet company and food producers to collaborate on.

The college Catering Manager has been an avid supporter of local producers and has worked to promote and use their products and ensure that students are well versed in the ethics of food miles. He has worked collaboratively with Wrexham Council to host 'food for thought events' over the past few years, which have helped link customers and buyers to local producers.

[Love Fine Food](#) is the next step that sees customers doing their weekly shop from a wide choice of locally sourced foods online and collecting it from Yale College.

"The idea is simple", says Andrew Parsonage, whose company Mican have been lead partners in the initiative by developing the website. "People are increasingly

interested in buying locally, whether for the quality, freshness or simply to reduce their food miles. However, busy people have little time to shop at multiple outlets when they can buy everything at the supermarket. Lovefinefoods.com brings the best of local produce under one website. Now food lovers can buy online and have all of their products assembled into a single order for them to collect in one visit.”

“It looks fantastic” says Jo Edwards of Aballu Artizan Chocolatiers, “it means that the small producers have a good platform for sales and to promote the quality of local food”.

And for students, the food stars of the future, the site has opened up a wealth of new opportunities. Linking it to the already successful Rendezvous Restaurant they are offering a range of "dine-at-home" dishes developed using produce from local suppliers so that the public can enjoy restaurant-quality food with friends and family in the comfort of their own home. “We have some very gifted students with a passion for producing good food and a 5\* kitchen where we work to the highest standards of hygiene” says Catering Manager Mark Parsons, “This venture provides the perfect vehicle to put these assets to good use, as well as benefiting local suppliers and food lovers. It’s a great example of a college working with the local community.”

### **Enterprise in the Curriculum**

Led by the Art, Media and Design department, “Thinc” is a Yale College initiative whose purpose is to support and promote enterprise within the Creative Industries sector, as well as providing a resource for students, staff, and artists & designers in the wider community.

This has led to the creation of a dynamic teaching and learning resource which is located in the Memorial Art Building at Yale College Wrexham, designed to encourage entrepreneurship to a wide range of learners and other interested stakeholders.

The Thinc project, which was initiated in March 2010, is an ongoing and developing resource. It is a commercial production and learning facility where students are able to produce and sell their designs and wares in greater quantities than previously possible. This was, in part, based on the purchase of a high specification Laser Cam (laser cutter), and a large format printer (with funding from the Welsh government), both of which are available to the public. This has led to various Yale student focused projects which relate directly to their curriculum. This includes designing slate plant markers, tea towels, house signs, posters and a variety of publicity materials for events such as the student Christmas Market in the Memorial Gallery.



This resource has enabled a move from quality design (artisan approach) to more entrepreneurial activity (quality design, manufacture and sales). Local artists, designers and companies are also able to hire these resources. This is an experiential learning opportunity that fully supports aspirations for self employment or starting a business and assists in identifying potential entrepreneurs

As part of the Thinc initiative, Thinc Quilts was set up also with funding assistance from the Welsh Government and with a focus on traditional Welsh crafts and sustainability.

This project launched an exciting new approach to traditional Welsh Creative Industries (covering industries linked to production of fleece, wool treatment, quilting and embellishment) with environmentally-friendly approaches and practices. Throughout these processes local and national businesses and guilds were involved, culminating in the production of proven organic, traditional Welsh products with a minimal traceable carbon footprint. In order to achieve this, a long arm quilting machine was acquired and a dedicated studio space established in order to create an enterprise focused resource within the Art & Design department. All Thinc Quilts produced during this project were created with the lowest possible carbon footprint in support of HRH Prince Charles' Campaign for Wool. The main piece of equipment purchased (the long arm quilter) is also available for public use

Products, quilts and blankets produced during this project were exhibited and sold at the National Eisteddfod in August 2011, which received an extremely positive response from other institutions, the public and other companies.



## **Impact**

Across the College in the period from September to November 2011 161 staff were engaged with enterprise/entrepreneurship activities and 2380 students with a total of 28 events registered.

## **The Art, Media and Design Department's approach has:**

- enabled creative industries students at Yale College to experience the whole process from design to sales on a more viable basis than previously possible;
- facilitated suitable staff training for those who coordinate the project and use the equipment;
- given the opportunity for over 370 students to achieve the Welsh Baccalaureate "Team Enterprise" and Key skills modules in 2010/11 (Improving own learning, Communications, Application of Number, Working with Others, ICT part, Problem Solving);
- ensured that all staff and students are potential clients and aware of entrepreneurial activity within the Learning Resource Centre; and

- enabled the Thinc initiative, from September 2011, to employ a fully designated member of staff under the Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

In the Catering and Hospitality Department, in addition to the wide range of experiences that the learners have benefited from, there have been clearly improved outcomes for learners across the department.

- NVQ Level 1 86% success rate (national average 79%)
- NVQ Level 2 83% success rate (national average 70%)
- NVQ Level 3 100% success rate (national average 57%)
- WBQ Foundation 94% success rate (national average 78%)
- 97.8% numeracy success rate across all courses

The new Welsh Baccalaureate qualification ensures that all learners have successfully completed all six Essential Skills Wales qualifications including communications, application of number and ICT, and also have undertaken a language module. All learners achieved 'Welsh in the Workplace' level 1 with learners now able to meet and greet and undertake basic customer care and to recognise and use key catering and food terms in Welsh.

In terms of commercial income the department's income from the restaurant in 2007-8 of approximately £30000 grew to a full catering business income of £130000 in 2010-11.