

TEACH TOO PHASE 3: NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE

Lead contact: James Swift

Employers: Greenvision Energy, Think Big Developments, Inntropy



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TEACH TOO PHASE 3

Teach Too Phase 3 was commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and managed by the Association of Colleges (AoC), working in partnership with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and HOLEX, the lead body for adult community education and learning.

Phase 3 of Teach Too built on the principles identified in earlier phases and, to give an indication of the scale of work undertaken, the 12 projects involved 675 learners, 120 provider staff and 100 employer staff.

The concept of Teach Too is identified by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) in its 2013 report as one of the ways to secure excellent vocational teaching and learning.

THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project was to design and deliver an employer-responsive work experience programme (criteria and schema) in preparation for the construction technical route, in partnership with employers from the sector.

The employer consultation funded through the project enabled the college to create opportunities for learners where they could add immediate value to the employer (through bespoke preparation) and experience a real sense of achievement and contribution. The project created work experience opportunities that effectively developed technical skills, alongside employability and enterprise skills.



Project aims

- To provide structured work experience for learners.
- To improve the preparation of Level 1 learners for work experience.
- To ensure that learners on work placements met employers' expectations.
- To align the contribution of learners on placement more closely to business needs.

Project description

The employers involved were small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro businesses working in the construction and sustainability industries. The project funding contributed to deepening preparation for learners at Level 1 and ensuring that employers were better informed about the learners' skills and attributes. The initiative was employer driven and rehearsed many issues underpinning the transition year in the reforms.

Think Big Developments focuses on providing support to people from deprived and challenging backgrounds to guide them towards successful career opportunities. This approach supported the project through the refurbishment of affordable housing in the local community.

Funding facilitated college and employer discussions to ensure mutual expectations were clear. These expectations framed an extensive preparatory period for learners. The schema and criteria used to capture these expectations pulled together a full range of knowledge, skills and behaviours appropriate for working in the sector. This ensured that learners' contributions to the business were maximised during their placement.

The project supported the college's strategy in response to the T-level reforms. In particular, it helped develop an understanding of the demands of the transition year and the work placement element of the reforms.

The project allowed 20 construction students to develop their vocational, employability and enterprise skills through structured work placements with three local SMEs and microbusinesses. Ten tutors and personal success coaches collaborated in the design of the work placement criteria. The work experience criteria and schema will be used again in 2017-18, in partnership with Think Big Developments, to repeat the activity and deliver work experience to 128 learners on construction pathways.



The project was very empowering in preparing potentially vulnerable learners for the world of work.

The project focused on what matters to employers and then concentrated on making work experience relevant to employers', as well as learners', needs.

JAMES SWIFT
BID MANAGER
NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE



The project went beyond developing qualifications and skills. Focusing on the attributes of Entry 3 and Level 1 students allowed them to make a much bigger contribution than expected.

JENNY CLARKE
WORK EXPERIENCE LEAD
NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE



Positive impacts

- Learner involvement in the project and its outputs was significant. They developed sophisticated team building, communication and time management skills and often exceeded the expectations placed upon them.
- Learners developed a strong understanding of knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to the workplace.
- The extended preparation for learners meant that they were much more likely to experience real work scenarios, for example, site visits, whilst on placements.
- One learner has achieved permanent employment through the work placement and one apprentice has also been taken as a result of relationships formed during the initiative.
- Learners that participated were those that were not yet ready for Level 3. The project increased their motivation and engagement.
- Collaboration was significantly enhanced between the college's personal success staff and curriculum specialists and also with the employers.
- The confidence of college staff, especially those in pastoral roles, in dealing with employers strongly improved.
- The project allowed for valuable industry upskilling and created opportunities for collaborative working to design engaging opportunities for learners.
- Employers strengthened their coaching and mentoring skills so learners were well supported.
- Through contributing to the schema, employers had opportunities to ensure that work placements added value to the business. This was strongly welcomed.
- The project piloted the building of capacity and expertise to develop a strategic approach to work placements across the organisation. This included areas where work placements are traditional (Health Care and Catering) and other areas new to providing placements.

Key learning points

- Explore opportunities for developing both increased business performance and employer contribution to community cohesion.
- The role of the centralised college work placement team in emphasising the key features of the journey to employment was crucial. Much of the success of the project was due to the effectiveness of matching learners and employers' expectations and understanding of the workplace.
- Ensure that resources and materials are relevant to a wide range of employer contexts.

- Explore the potential for strategies to impact on apprenticeship developments.
- Develop clear links to skills needs in the locality.
- Maximise leadership 'buy-in', especially in the case of SMEs. The college leadership team were also fully engaged in the initiative.
- The college reputation is important. The site specialising in construction delivery is seen as the first choice locally for employers.

Recommendations for developing employer partnerships

- Ensure that learners understand and develop wider skills such as effective communication, team building and working with others.
- Provide a wide range of opportunities for colleagues from all roles and parties to discuss developments around a shared agenda.
- Make the links explicit between the project and national policy developments. In this case, this was the T-Level pilot and responding to the Post-16 skills plan. Alignment with local enterprise partnerships priorities was also clear.
- Ensure that the employers' needs are prioritised throughout. This maximises engagement and motivation.
- Work towards sustainable relationships that demonstrate mutual benefits.
- Use events with the learners, employers, and local partners to celebrate learner success through the employer/provider collaboration.

Links and contact details

James Swift

james.swift@nottinghamcollege.ac.uk

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