TEACH TOO LOCAL PROJECT

A case study on the Teach Too local project in Lancashire led by The Lancashire Colleges group

Project overview

The project has been a collaboration between The Lancashire Colleges, the representative body of 12 FE Colleges across Lancashire[1], Lancashire Skills Hub, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership and local digital employers. Digital is recognised as a key local priority and as such Lancashire was one of only two local Digital Skills Partnerships established by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2018.

The project explores how local digital businesses can help enhance digital curriculum and share skills with digital teaching staff at local FE colleges and provide partnership opportunities for future developments and curriculum co-creation for the new digital T level qualifications. This has been achieved by providing industry-led showcase sessions which gave an overview of a company and the segment of digital industry it trades in; and an employer-led masterclass on a specialist digital topic which is likely to be part of the new T level curriculum. Mini case studies of some of the sessions are available at: http://www.tlc.ac.uk/teach-too

Project aims

The project direct aims are:

- Identify and engage 10 digital sector businesses to offer industry sessions for staff from 10 colleges in Lancashire.
- Enable further intensive collaborative work between 5 businesses and 5 colleges to develop T level relevant pedagogy and result in masterclass delivery for colleges, which could then be mirrored across The Lancashire Colleges network.

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[1] The Lancashire Colleges represent: Accrington & Rossendale College, Burnley College, Blackburn College, Blackpool & The Fylde College, Cardinal Newman College, Nelson & Colne College, Runshaw College, Myerscough College, Preston's College, West Lancashire College, Lancaster & Morecambe College, Blackpool Sixth Form College

- The creation of classroom material and a 'Teaching 101' desk aid for employers new to teaching who would like to engage in guest lectures.

Some of the indirect aims of the project are:

- Strategic level working between senior curriculum leads in colleges, employers, the Lancashire Skills Hub and employer bodies to increase understanding of the need for integrated development and delivery of T Levels and Industry Placements.

- Dissemination of findings of the project with immediate transfer of good practice to Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing Routeway Networks using Lancashire's Gatsby Foundation funding resource.

- Cross-college sharing of practice to enhance current delivery.

- Sharing of practice with other T Level preparation projects and areas through our Gatsby Foundation network.

Technical Education Industry day at Lancaster & Morecambe College (23 January 2019)

Positive outcomes and impact

Engagement from Colleges (37 staff from 12 colleges directly involved)

- All 12 colleges engaged with at least 1 industry session or

masterclass.

- Qualitative and Quantitative feedback suggested that every session was of a high quality and well received by attendees

- A number of new significant employers were introduced to a wide range of college partners. Employers such as Red Fern had not previously had any direct engagement with FE.

- A number of historically hidden digital areas of expertise were identified for further curriculum development including Testing, Cyber Security, Ecommerce and Project Management etc.

- Evidence of staff being able to articulate their CPD requirements considering the new T level qualification framework. Testing will form a significant element of T levels and ROQ's masterclass brought this to life, especially for college curriculum staff.

Engagement from Employers (33 Employer staff from 17 Employers directly involved)

- Employers only interested if potential for long term partnership working rather than completing project as a transaction. One employer is keen to establish a joint venture company to work with a college on industry placements from Digital T Levels.

- Employers understood the potential long term return on investment of this kind of work rather than immediate tangible benefits. One employer is keen to ensure that this was the beginning of a relationship exploring ways of gaining new talent into their organisation.

- Employers were keen to showcase their organisations and use the opportunity to create discussions around related but discrete partnership opportunities particularly around talent discovery. One employer has subsequently opened up their "Defectives: Battle of the bands" event to FE students which was previously only available to university students.

- While the funding did not cover the true economic cost of their time investment in this project employers acknowledged that the available funding from the project helped justify involvement rather than relying on just goodwill or corporate social responsibility motives.

Positive impact on partnership working

- The project provided a menu of opportunities for colleges and employers which enabled engagement in subject areas where

greater knowledge and skills were required. While there was a programmatic structure the flexibility of participation was appreciated by employers and college staff

- There is already evidence that partnership working beyond the CPD agenda has already taken place. A number of colleges report connections made with the businesses involved in terms of guest lecturing, student competitions and attendance at careers fairs.

- Collaborative engagement in shared CPD activity provides economies of scale not available to single institutions. This is evidenced by the difficulty that all institutions have had in releasing 2 or more members of staff for CPD purposes.

- Conversations with employers have enabled deeper relationships to develop with the right people at the right level rather than solely transactional relationships. EKM stated that they would love to engage with colleges but had never known the right people to contact. The event that they are hosting has put them directly into contact with a college's head of computing.

Future activity

- Plans are underway to ensure lessons learnt from this Teach Too project inform our strategic approach to collaborative CPD provision especially for other T level subject areas such as Construction and Engineering & Manufacturing. Lancashire Skills Hub is now in the process of developing the model for use with other T Level routeways. In addition, further sessions with digital businesses are planned to continue into the summer term.

- Funding has been allocated through association with the Gatsby Foundation to provide sustainable CPD activity based on this project

- The Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership and Digital Lancashire, Lancashire's Digital Trade body, are committed to taking forward this agenda and activity to engage even more digital businesses in conversations on a whole range of topics with their local colleges, resulting with a further event planned in West Lancashire for the summer. Mark Thwaite from Digital Lancashire said, "A great event, and one we're keen to replicate, roadshow!"

- The Lancashire Colleges have submitted a bid for a follow-on project around creating a partnership wide teaching resource that could help back-fill teaching staff when they are required to undertake CPD activity.

Designing your CPD for senior leaders (14th February 2019)

Recommendations for developing local collaborative arrangements

- Staff release for CPD is highly desirable but needs extensive planning and co-ordination at both an institutional and pan-institutional level.

- Capacity is needed for a co-ordinating organisation to plan activities collaboratively and this effort should not be underestimated. Without funding for administrative and management support these activities would not take place.

- The aim of engaging local employers in any joint activities should not be just transactional but seen as a stepping stone to developing deep and meaningful relationships with business.

- With the right encouragement and planning, enlightened digital businesses will engage in these activities as part of their business focus not just from a corporate social responsibility perspective. This is a prime example of the Two Way Street principle embedded in Teach Too.

- While funding is needed for providing logistical support, a project such as this could not meet the full economic costs of a large number of digital organisations. Expectations on both sides need to be managed to ensure best outcomes for the funds available. As we seek to replicate the very best of this

Teach Too project we will ensure that our business case planning incorporates these lessons.

- This project has been undertaken in a brief 'hothouse' timescale. It has been necessary to use other resources to keep employers engaged where they wished to be involved, but within a longer timeframe. Equally it has been challenging to ask colleges to frequently release staff in this short timescale. A planned prolonged structure will help the success of future activity.