

TEACH TOO ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A case study on the Teach Too organisational development project at Nelson and Colne College





Project overview

Nelson and Colne College is one of the 2020 T Level providers and will be delivering two of the three available routes as one of 50 providers nationally.

The College is committed to providing high quality Industry Placements as part of the T Level qualification and understands the importance of employer involvement throughout the entire curriculum, including in the co-design, co-delivery of curriculum and assessment of learning.

To this aim, the college aimed to put in place a range of structures, systems and processes to embed employer collaboration into curriculum so it would become a sustainable and fundamental part of both the T Level programme and the wider vocational curriculum.

The Teach Too principles of collaboration between educator and employer, leading to measurable benefits to students, represented what the organisation was aiming to implement, and the Teach Too organisational project enabled the College to move towards embedding those principles through a whole-organisation approach to employer engagement and collaboration.

As this was an organisational project, the activity encompassed everything from initial engagement to co-design and delivery.

The overarching objective was to implement and embed a sustainable model that would enable the college to continuously grow its partnerships with employers and the expertise of those employers as dual professionals, as well as having an impact on curriculum delivery and the expertise of teaching staff.

Project aims

The aim of the project was that Teach Too would: -

- further strengthen our strategy in developing a true partnership with employers through the sharing of expertise, and strategic support to:

- co-create assessments for students on placements
- deliver industry-relevant content to students
- support the sector knowledge development of curriculum staff
- establish sector-specific strategic employer advisory boards to support relevant curriculum development and delivery

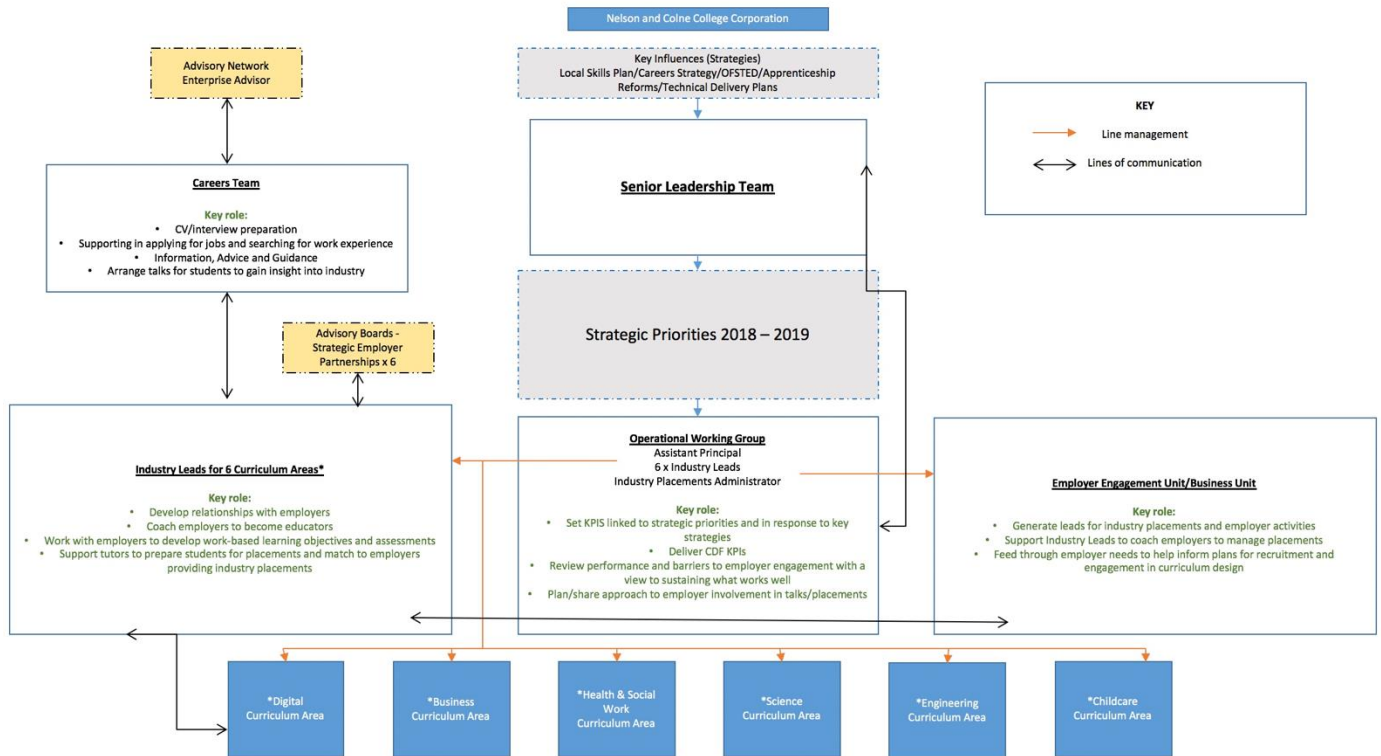
Although Industry Placements were taking place as part of the Capacity and Delivery Fund activity, employers had not been inducted in a formal way into the principles of assessment of learning and were unsure of their responsibilities in developing learning objectives and assessing students in the workplace.

Therefore, Teach Too was integrated into the existing CDF Operational Working Group to contribute to:

- establish an annual engagement event designed to showcase careers in the sector, facilitate employer-student interaction; strengthen relationships between curriculum and employers, and also to pledge commitment to placements.
- launch sector-specific advisory boards to improve curriculum relevance, offer employers the opportunity to deliver to students, and provide staff opportunities for developing as dual professionals
- put in place employer induction and coaching to manage students on placement.
- develop work-based assignments that meet employer, learner and college objectives allowing students time from existing timetables to spend time in industry and not fall behind.

In order for Teach Too principles to be embedded across the organisation, the Teach Too project was led by the Assistant Principal for Technical Curriculum, leading on implementation plans for technical education, taking a strategic approach to employer integration through a dedicated Operational Working Group. In this way, there could be a whole-organisation approach that would lead to the successful implementation of the Teach Too principles.

The diagram below illustrates the key relationships that were established or leveraged across the organisation in order to develop the project. It was essential that we maximise the opportunities for cross-college working in order to meet our strategic priorities and ensure that employers were not only engaged but inducted, coached and supported. The diagram illustrates the leadership involvement and the influence of the strategic priorities of the organisation in encouraging cross-college working in curriculum, leadership and affiliated support areas, leading to a cohesive approach to employer engagement.



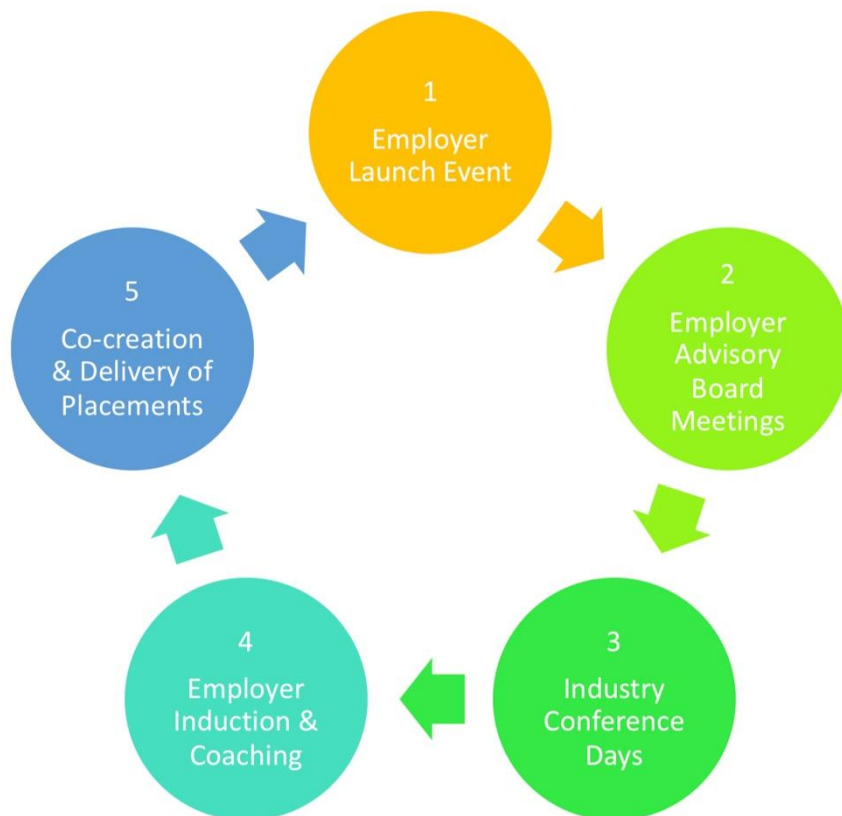
Positive impact and expected outcomes

The activity and outputs of the project were as follows: -

1. Industry Placements employer launch event where employers pledged support and input into curriculum through placements, co-delivery, designing curriculum assignments and live briefs, and speaking at student-facing events.
2. Employer advisory boards established to influence and support the alignment of curriculum content with industry.
3. Sector-focussed 'Industry Conference Day' events in each curriculum area, showcasing careers and placement opportunities, with employers delivering sessions to students on careers, employability skills and sector information, and featuring a teacher-employer networking lunch.
4. Three employer induction videos produced, designed to coach employers through the Industry Placement process and explain the role of the employer in developing and assessing the student.
5. Co-creation of work-based assessments by teachers and employers.

The diagram below illustrates how the different activities in the

employer engagement process link together to build a sustainable annual model that aims to develop a continually growing group of employer partners skilled in a variety of delivery styles. This model enables employers to select a level of involvement that suits them and ensures that existing partners are re-engaged on an annual basis.



Impact

One of the key advantages of the organisational approach of this project was that it allowed us to truly embed employers into the structures and processes of the college, rather than employer engagement being an afterthought or an add-on to existing structures and processes.

Previously, we had had some success in working with employers but the quality and extent of engagement across the curriculum was uneven, as there was no link to the strategic objectives of the organisation and less senior leadership involvement in the implementation of employer engagement in curriculum. The implementation of the Teach Too principles, therefore, was the ultimate goal, however it was essential that a substantial amount of groundwork be done before those principles could be implemented effectively and, most crucially, with lasting impact and sustainability.

To this aim, it was crucial that all activity be cross-curriculum and be part of the annual cycle of college activity. This was achieved through the establishing of an annual cycle of events and by creating resources for employer induction that could be used beyond the life of the project.

There has been an immediate impact on the teaching and learning in curriculum through the close working relationships that have developed between curriculum Industry Leads and individual employer partners, and the industry knowledge that curriculum teams have developed as a result. The Industry Leads have provided rich examples of this:

Industry Lead for Digital:

"I have changed quite a few things I deliver, for example web design: I have shifted focus heavily onto back end design (CSS) as opposed to using software to build websites as this skill is more transferable with industry. Also what order we deliver units, we have switched year two unit to year one as employers are needing more graphic skills as opposed to animation."

"I also reference everything I deliver to industry as I have confidence that what I am delivering is used and I will give examples of how it's used."

"Having known this there is greater emphasis than before on relating the Curriculum to possible placements, previously there has been more of a general overview of possibilities, now there are more specific roles identified, which gives clarity to some students for what they can achieve."

One of the outcomes of the project has been a more cross-college, whole-organisation approach to employer partnerships. As illustrated in the organisational chart above, the design of the activity enabled the Industry Leads to link across the organisation to leverage a range of expertise to support employer engagement and partnership:

Industry Lead for Business:

"Having a T-level group and frame work has been a good organisation addition as it has brought different areas together and at least started the ball rolling- in some cases addressing concerns and fears from a range of colleagues across the college. I would also say that there are stronger links between the teaching staff (industry leads) and senior leaders due to the meetings and communications that are routinely scheduled."

Industry Lead for Science:

"I have started to bridge the gap between vocational and apprenticeships I have started to build up a rapport with a few from the team and this is slowly leading to more opportunities for my students."

"My relationship between all areas has improved, I have found out what other staff do, their connections and how they can help with sourcing placements. We have exchanged information about contacts as well as exchange ideas that could help develop our role."

Industry Lead for Engineering:

I have had to work closely with key members of my own team in terms of the selection process. From a cross college view point, I have sought advice and guidance from the other industry leads and members. Having a T-level group and framework has been a good organisation addition as it has brought different areas together and at least started the ball rolling- in some cases addressing concerns and fears from a range of colleges across the college. I would also say that there are stronger links between the teaching staff (industry leads) and senior leaders due to the meetings and communications that are routinely scheduled.

In the relationships between curriculum staff and employers, there are emerging examples of co-production and plans for dual professionalism

Industry Lead for Engineering:

“With two of the employers there is and has been opportunity for co-production (in terms of curriculum mapping/evidencing work practices to the qualification). Now that relationships are being built and trust being formed between the employer and student.”

Industry Lead for Science:

“I have found working closely with employers building relationships makes things so much easier when you need guest speakers, take for example our industry day - how successful this was with the quality of guest speakers I got in to run workshops.”

“The Canals and Rivers Trust have worked with college previously, it had since gone quiet and we are now working together to offer more Industry placements as well as the possibility of combining training such as safeguarding using the team over at college so that learners are role ready. They have also offered to run projects with other curriculum areas such as HNC and L3 Applied Science general work experience.”

“Co-production of job description and implementation of how the roles will work ...with employers. One employer has actually created a role for our students.”

“When arranging placements, I have discussed...what we would like their role as an employer to be, what is expected of the students and what the employers should expect from the students and have given them an insight into the qualification that we are delivering and how it links to the career and skills that are needed to be supported by the employer. I have also given them a week in the life of a student example in terms of what they do at college and then examples from other placements of what they have done whilst there.”

The Employer Launch Event was a crucial activity, which was originally intended to take place early in the process of implementation, however, the logistical challenges of organising such a large event, off-site, with a large number of employers, meant that this event was pushed back to near the end of the project. However, the outcomes of the event will feed into future activity as fifty employers were engaged and 100% of those who attended filled in a pledge card to commit to some level of engagement.

The employer launch event was an important part of our strategy in engaging employers and increasing their understanding of T Levels, Industry Placements and their roles in working with students. The Industry Leads led discussions with groups of employers linked to their curriculum and the data from these discussions is still being analysed, but the initial feedback from the event was extremely positive.

A number of issues and challenges became apparent as the project activities developed:

- One issue is around the age of students and the regulations or working practices that prevent under-18s from using certain machinery or working with particular groups. - Engineering and Science.
- Some employers were reluctant to let students risk their product/component build and quality. - Engineering
- Industry Leads had limited time to work with employers in the workplace to co-design assessments for learners on placement, due to teaching commitments. - all areas.
- A significant number of businesses have less than 10 employees, these are most reluctant to take on students compared with the larger companies with international recognition and have work experience programmes as part of their staff development profile. There are skills gaps that could be addressed but it is likely that industry panels are most competent at ascertaining this. - all areas
- Initially, employers had concerns about the training of students in preparation not being thorough enough for the placement roles being offered. 17% of employers in the area suggest that a lack of the required skills is a problem, so this is clearly an area where the college can work to increase employer confidence in the preparation process. (Data from <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Burnley-and-Pendle-TTWA-report.pdf>). - Science.

Future activity

As an organisation, we are continuing to implement the Teach Too principles through the annual Industry Conference Days and employer advisory boards that will continue as part of the structures and processes of the organisation. The employer induction videos will be a resource that can be used on an ongoing basis, and then followed up by the one-to-one coaching that takes place before and during Industry Placement.

Although there was not the opportunity to hold stand-alone employer

coaching sessions to develop employers' mentoring and assessing skills in a more sophisticated way, this is something that will take place as part of the college's CPD cycle, as employers are now considered an essential part of the development and assessment of students.