



Evaluation of Career Colleges

Lynne Rogers, Hilary McQueen and Ken Spours

- A 'college within a college'
- Emphasis on employability
- Line of sight to work
- Partnerships – employers and FE
- Specialist areas – routed in the community
- Support from the Career Colleges Trust

- Career Colleges are set up and operate;
- The specialist curriculum is identified, developed and delivered;
- Career Colleges are perceived by different stakeholders;
- Employer engagement and commercial education contributes to the experience of the young people;
- Career Colleges support young people's transition to positive destinations, and
- The support, review and development tool and monitoring process that the Career Colleges Trust has developed drives improvement.

- Four-stage approach
 - Semi-structured interviews with 12 Career College leads
 - Online-survey 30 teachers
 - Case studies of six FE colleges – a total of 10 Career Colleges
 - Interviews with seven central staff members of the Career Colleges Trust

Strengthening levels of employer engagement and enhancing the employability and progression of their students

Decisions about the specialist vocational areas were premised on the skill priorities within the locality and the expertise of the college:

All of the qualifications that we offer in the college should be linked to the city areas of demand. We have a huge growth in engineering and construction, a huge growth in hospitality and catering and travel and tourism. (Career College Lead)

Full-time direct entry provision

or Shared responsibility – part time in College and part time in school

Combination of GCSEs and vocational qualifications

Our offer is unique because the students will get six GCSEs and a BTEC level 2 engineering and a BTEC level 2 IT.
(Teacher)

Study programme - a combination of qualifications and activities linked to a core aim, such as preparation for employment or academic qualifications

Plus maths and English if required / business focus

Additionality in some Career Colleges was through extended projects. In others there was a distinct programme.

Shaped by shaped by employer engagement and stakeholder input

So, the main core programme, all of ours are delivered, have been negotiated, agreed with our stakeholders, then we build other elements around that key programme to further develop their personal, employability skills and English and maths. Work experience is also built into the programme and negotiated with stakeholders as part of the set up. (Career College Lead)

- Curriculum offer was integral to the overall model of Career Colleges

Our whole curriculum is directly associated with the needs of our employers and specialist sector. (Teacher)

Fundamentally underpinning this was the college's commitment to employer engagement and specifically looking at how we can generate a more employer-led curriculum. (Career College Lead)

- Benefits for young people
- Developing a pipeline of talent
- Employer board
- Keeping up with industry standards
- Support with decisions about equipment
- Working together

Relating the training and work experiences to industry which enhances the learning experience plus allows the staff to keep up with current industrial standards. (Teacher)

Also, there is such a lot of cross over between the two – this is increasing really quickly at the moment. If you go to any construction site now they are surveying with drones they are using modelling so there is a lot of technology, there is a lot of engineering. The same with materials, a lot more steel and glass now with people having engineering backgrounds rather than traditional construction. The board meets every four weeks. We have the employers, two college governors, myself, and representation from the two curriculum teams.

We've got an excellent support system to get work placements. They've been to Nissan, Accenture, so they've had a taste of manufacture engineering, digital. We've had them at solicitors, Marine School, a range of opportunities and they would not get that at school. They had a full week placement at Nissan and a full week at Accenture as well as individual employers in the summer time.

- Making a difference in relation to their industry:

As a construction company we wanted to engage with young people who are interested in a career in construction and to promote the industry and its opportunities. (Employer)

- And in relation to the local community:

[I'm a] local authority employer, involved as a stakeholder and employer, reason - to support the development of skills for local people. (Employer)

- Guest lecturers, masterclasses, skills demonstrations, site visits, extended work placements, mentoring and co-assessment for practical work.
- Health and care students benefited from strong links with the local hospital where they trained as part of their study programme. The hospital itself had its own educational unit, and nursing practitioners from there contributed their expertise to the college teaching.

- Developing apps, supporting small companies in complying with GDPR, catering for events, costing
- Annual industry-led project that was organised and run as an inter-college competition by the Career Colleges Trust.
- Developing enterprise capabilities such as teamworking skills, problem-solving, communication, cooperation, planning and organisation.

It gives the students the real world instead of scenario-based lessons. (Teacher)

It gives you more of a professional view of the industry. When we were there they were talking about roles and it gave me a mature understanding of how business works. I guess it's given me a better work ethic. It's made me want to work harder to get into the role I want. Everyone has a specific role and it's up to you to make sure you're doing what you need to do and it's more like you can't rely on someone else, you have to take the consequences of your actions, you have to make sure you're doing the work you're meant to be doing and you can't push blame on other people. If you're given a specific job you have to get that done. (Student)

So rather than do a traditional report or a presentation, as before, they are doing things like presenting on a project through different means. This could be a spreadsheet or a set of financial accounts, they might have to communicate it through email or other means... In terms of the email they [the students] might have to send it to employers and then employers would feedback on how professional they felt it was. This has been a completely new way of doing assessment. (Career College Lead)



It gives students the opportunity to get earned work opportunities, so in the creative and digital space we have a number of, well actually anyone from the community, any organisation, any company can apply for a piece of work to be done and our students will pitch in, do and quote and if the offer is right they'll win the business. So, for example, our students have created Apps for the NHS, that's paid income. That's something we've done in the career college subjects, something we've initiated. (Career College Lead)

I feel, again, understanding of work and the industry we're getting into and we can get inspiration because it's not only the places we've gone to, we've had people come here and talk and for me it's freedom. But through these experiences I feel we are most prepared for when we leave the college. When I left secondary school I felt lost but when I leave here I'm going to feel prepared and ready. (Student)

Employer board as a reciprocal partnership

Embedding of authentic employer-led projects – which may necessitate creative approaches to assessment

College-wide strategies to enable all staff to continually update their professional expertise