



Education-Business Consultancy & Support

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Skills Workshop

Skills for work - skills for life

The Student Journey - response to call for information and views

- Provide the Committee with any information/literature/data, in relation to your work with schools, businesses and young people and their experiences with education and employability, you think may be useful in this review.

I first started working with schools in this arena in March 2004 as a contracted advisor to the **Enterprise Advisor Service (EAS)**. The EAS was a DFES initiative to bring people from the world of business into schools to provide funded support, in particular for those schools identified as in the greatest need of support using the Free School Meals measure to identify them. The remit of the EAS was to work with schools to help them understand the Enterprise and Work-related Learning agendas and to support them in:

- Understanding the requirements of the agendas
- Auditing and base-line assessment of their current provision
- Action planning
- Effective collaborative working with support providers and local employers.

The end-game was to help schools both to develop a culture of enterprise as a vehicle for school improvement, to help them to produce employable young people, and also to become self sustaining in their provision of enterprise education, including being more informed and pro-active consumers of the services offered by support organisations and employers.

The initiative ended at the end of the 2006 school year and by this time the remit had spread from the original, restricted range of client schools to as many schools in the county as were prepared and able to engage with the agendas. During this time, of the 121 mainstream Kent & Medway secondary schools in existence in July 2006, **57 schools were actively supported by the EAS on a 1-1 basis with a further 41 schools having received contact and support through attendance at conferences and workshops. My own activity brought me into direct contact with 31 schools which I actively supported in some form.**

Following the end of the EAS contract, funding for the support of Enterprise Education became channelled through the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust through the S'EEN (**Schools' Enterprise Education Network**) programme, and latterly the **Enterprise Network** through a nationwide network of **Enterprise Learning Partnerships (ELP)**. Both of these organisations channelled the support of enterprise education through the network of Business & Enterprise specialist schools and colleges and I was contracted to work with both of them as co-ordinator and consultant to effectively continue the support previously provided by the EAS. Funding for the ELP programme ends on 31st March 2011 and all ELP's have been working over the past year to try to ensure their sustainability with no central funding. The Kent & Medway ELP comprises the 12 Business & Enterprise specialist schools in the county as well as partner schools, academies, and other interested schools, and is working in partnership with the 14-19 Innovation Team of KCC (through Martin Blincow) and is currently able to maintain operations for at least another calendar year with discussions and projects under proposal to support it beyond then.

The Kent & Medway ELP (KMELP) effectively devolved funding to 10 Local ELP's in the county to develop activities to support schools in their areas. A wide range of enterprise activities was supported during this time, a full list of which can be supplied on request and has been included in end of project reporting to SSAT. The range of activities was predominantly focussed on KS4 (as this was the original focus of the Enterprise Education agenda) but also included activities for special schools, primary schools and post 16 learners. The activities of the ELP have been the focus for the development of a Draft **Kent Enterprise Education Strategy** by the KCC Innovations team which has largely been informed by the work of the ELP.

Over the 2 years of the EAS, and during the development of the S'EEN and ELP networks, the Enterprise/WrL agenda has developed and is now generally understood to mean both the development of employability skills in our young people and also the development of personal and life skills to support them in their effective studying and life after education.

In addition to providing consultancy support as outlined above, my business has also provided a range of activities and consultancy services in support of schools' applied learning, Enterprise Education, and Work-related Learning agendas. These include:

- Diploma development support for the Maidstone & Malling 14-19 Partnership in support of the Business Administration & Finance and Sport & Active Leisure diplomas
- Employer engagement through the establishment and support of a school-led Enterprise Exchange as a vehicle for the bringing together of schools and local employers
- Provision of training services to teachers relating to applied learning, employer engagement and diploma delivery
- Provision of a range of activities for schools to support the delivery of enterprise, work-related learning, applied learning and employer engagement. A brief summary of the activities provided is attached.
- Development and delivery of bespoke activities to support the delivery of vocational subjects in schools.
- Development of a Business Challenge programme in co-operation with local employers to engage young people with local employers in a structured and meaningful way, with measurable learning outcomes. This programme has been taken up by 2 Maidstone schools as an effective replacement for KS4 work experience
- Through the above activities, and in association with other like-minded people with complementary experience, we have developed a working model which we are in the process of expanding in the Gravesham area to create a sustainable community business partnership with commercially sustainable support for student improvement and the long-term engagement of local employers.

Collaboration is key in this arena and we work hard to engage with other stakeholder groups and organisations including **Kent Enterprise Education Partners** (KEEP - this includes KCC Innovations team, Connexions, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, FSB, Kent Foundation, Business Support Kent and other stakeholder groups), a range of local employers, and through membership of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses.

In their current guise, Work-related Learning and Enterprise Education have been in currency since the autumn of 2003. The availability to schools of funding through their Dedicated Schools Grant and the provision of funded support through the EAS, the ELP and the Education Business Link contract administered by KCC have led to a wide range of enterprise activities across the county with the aim of developing positive and engaged young people and equipping them with the necessary skills to be successful in their studies and in life after school. A number of reviews and studies have attested to the effectiveness of enterprise and WrL as drivers for the overall improvement in standards of education. All of this appears to be at risk with current central government thinking appearing to be progressing along different lines, especially for Key Stage 4 learners. The Wolf Review comments that there is no evidence for the assertion that learners following a vocational course are more engaged than learners following general courses. My experience would certainly support that assertion. However, those schools that have developed effective and integrated Work-related Learning programmes and have embedded Enterprise Education within the curriculum can certainly point to improved levels of engagement and of student performance. A school that I was talking with today commented that the impact of WrL and Enterprise on their most disengaged youngsters, those at risk of becoming NEET, has reduced the percentage levels from around 4% to around 1%.

The SSAT **Business and Enterprise Head Teacher Steering Group** (B&EHTSG) has recently issued a position paper putting the case for business and enterprise education and I have attached a copy of that with this submission. The paper was co-authored by David Butler, the previous lead inspector for enterprise for OFSTED. Within it is a statement that ***'There is strong evidence, particularly in specialist business and enterprise schools, that enterprise education has been an important influence in raising achievement across subjects because it has led to more innovative teaching and made learning more relevant.'***

- Offer your views on any of the topics outlined in the draft terms of reference above.

The following are some of my personal views having worked at 'the sharp end' of provision of enterprise and Work-related Learning in Kent schools for the past 7 years and being recognised and respected for my work in this field.

The Enterprise Education agenda was developed in response to the need identified by the last Labour government to address the mis-match between employers' needs for their future employees and the skills that young people were

being equipped (or rather, not being equipped) with. Many studies and reports over the past few years have come up with similar views on the skills young people need to develop in order to be effective, functioning potential employees. They focus on the need to be able to communicate effectively, to work well with other people, to be versatile and accepting of change, to be innovative in their thinking, and to develop a positive attitude, as well as the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and IT.

During the past 7 years schools have, in my opinion, generally understood and accepted the importance of these agendas although implementation has been patchy. Those schools who have embraced the concept of developing positive young people through enterprise and by bringing the relevance of their learning to life through effective WrL have benefitted from improved standards of overall education and pupil progression. However, schools need continued support in this area if the good work of the past 7 years is not to be lost and this is imperilled by the apparent direction of current government policy.

I have taken account all of the following documents and instruments, and others, in forming my views, in addition to my own direct experience of the past 7 years.

The Wolf Review
The Importance of Teaching
The 2009/10 Ofsted annual report
The Review of the National Curriculum
Skills for Sustainable Growth
The Comprehensive Spending Review

In my view, the Wolf Review is, overall, a sound, well-researched and well argued document which develops a range of themes that have been apparent to me personally and in the views expressed by other professional in education. A range of themes it develops , I believe, are demonstrably accurate including (but not only):

- The need to provide a solid foundation of core general skills
- The need to provide meaningful and valuable post 16 vocational qualifications
- The need to reform school performance measures and remove the incentive for relatively easy equivalencies to GCSE's that hinder pupils later progression
- Removal of the trend for specialisation as early as yr 9 and locking learners in to programmes that hinder or restrict their later progression

However, the review makes no reference at all to enterprise education and refers to Work-related Learning only in terms of equating it to Work Experience, which in my view is wrong. Whilst I fully agree that Work Experience at KS4 is expensive and, for many learners, a poor quality experience which adds little to their overall development and learning, this is by no means the whole story. For those young people in KS4 who have a good quality work experience placement it can be a powerful motivator to them in their learning. However, Work experience is only one element of Work-related Learning, not the whole story. A good quality WrL programme, regardless of whether or not it includes any vocational qualifications, or indeed work experience, is a very powerful motivational tool. It brings relevance to the learning and, most importantly, it provides a framework for young people to genuinely engage with local employers and gain an understanding of the world of work that awaits them. In CPD sessions that I have run for teachers I have often referred to Enterprise Education as the 'what' and Work-related Learning as the 'how' when it comes to helping young people develop employability skills.

The Ofsted Annual Report refers to the effectiveness of employer engagement as follows:

The focus that businesses place on enterprise, problem-solving and investigation encourages pupils to become self-reliant and develop work-related skills

Business partnerships can contribute to improvements in examination pass rates and the proportion of students gaining higher grades

Working with employers increases the relevance and quality of the vocational offer for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers.

Ofsted Annual Report 2009/2010

Good quality work-related learning, with well-managed and supported involvement of local employers is a strong force for improvement of the educational standards of a large proportion of our young people. This does not only

refer to the county's high schools, although it is particularly relevant to them, but also to those grammar schools that I have worked with who see the benefits to their learners of relating their learning to real life and work.

Employers, however, and businesses in particular, need to see a benefit to them in engagement with schools and this needs to go beyond the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda. For many small businesses, who are the most difficult to engage due to their need to be focussed full-time on their businesses, means need to be sought for them to benefit in business terms by working with young people. This does not mean paying them, as proposed by some including the Wolf Review. Models do exist through which employers will willingly take part as they can see real business benefits to them but the programmes need careful management and support. Schools generally are very poor at communicating with businesses and are ill-equipped to develop long term, mutually beneficial relationships. As a result, communication often breaks down, programmes with good potential founder, and businesses become disillusioned and vote with their feet. The model we are currently developing in Gravesham, which builds on current experience in schools and with local business, provides a means for sustainable employer engagement which can be rolled out to any other region, provided it is well managed.

There is a need to integrate the conclusions and proposals of the various documents referred to above and to focus on developing provision that has resonance at a local level. The Wolf review makes much, and rightly so, of the need to delegate decision making to a local level with the involvement of employers local to the schools. The same is true of provision in Kent. Kent is a large county with a wide geographic spread and the whole range of differing economic micro-climates. Decision-making should be devolved to schools and groups of schools but supported by KCC funding and provision of support services either in-house or, more likely, contracted out.

A.Brading, March 2011

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