



# Give Yourself the Edge

Evaluation Executive Survey

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## Introduction

Young people in England face transitions into a complex education and labour market system. These difficulties create a challenge for young people trying to make informed decisions about work and their future. Smooth transitions from education to work is critical to developing a skilled and responsive labour market.

Despite the repeatedly stated aspiration of bringing education and employment closer together, young people are now spending longer and longer in education often with very limited exposure to the workplace. The lengthening of school to work transitions has also been accompanied by the increasing complexity of educational and vocational options (Dorsett and Luccino, 2015; Hutchinson and Kettlewell, 2015; Lanning, 2012). The ever changing nature of the English education system means that students who are currently in school will encounter reforms to GCSE, AS and A levels (DfE, 2015), an overhaul of higher education (DBIS, 2016) and the results of Lord Sainsbury's vocational education proposals (DBIS and DfE, 2016).

## Changes to Career Education

In December 2017 the Government published a new careers strategy (DfE, 2017). This strategy solidifies the importance of career education in schools and reiterates the importance of meaningful encounters for young people with employers (Mann, 2016).

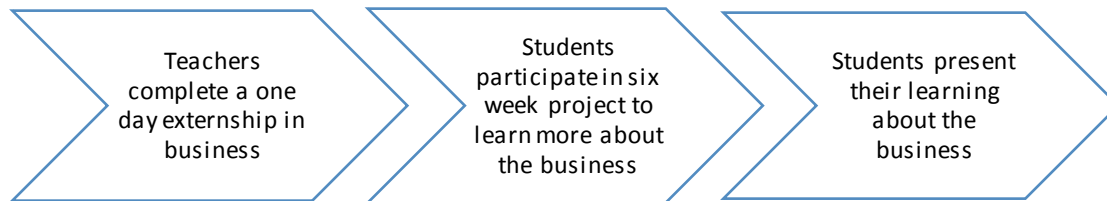
Teachers form important relationships with young people and in many instances occupy an critical role in supporting career education (Dodd, 2017; Hooley & Andrews, 2015). Teacher placements have emerged as a potentially effective activity to support both teacher professional development and employer engagement in schools. Teacher placements can support:

- improved quality of business-education partnerships;
- the development of curriculum materials based of the world of work; and
- experiential learning opportunities.

Despite limited research, teacher placements have positive outcomes for teachers (Dodd, 2017). Teacher placements have been found to increase knowledge and understanding of business and industry. In addition teacher placements have been found to both improve capacity to deliver learning and to change the teaching practice of teachers.

## About Give Yourself the Edge

GYTE is a careers education programme targeting Year 8 students in secondary schools. There are three core components to the programme.



GYTE took place in three regions over the course of 2017-2018:

- Nottingham
- Derby
- Newcastle/North East

Students were given the following brief at the beginning of the project:

*Imagine you work for a local employer. It's your job to recruit new and enthusiastic staff to the business. You need to create a presentation outlining why the employer and the business is the best place to work.*

*You need to cover:*

- *What the employer/ business does?*
- *Outline the careers which are available in the business. Include both the more obvious jobs that they are known for and any 'hidden jobs' you didn't know about at the start of the project.*
- *Explain why the employer is the 'top place to work'. What is it like work there? What have they achieved recently? Why would you recommend it to a friend?*

## Key findings

GYTE achieved many of the programme outcomes they articulated:

- 80% of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that participating in Give Yourself the Edge gave them an insight into the world of work.
- Schools were able to develop or strengthen employer links.
- Students had raised aspirations; 67% of students agreed that GYTE helped them think about what they wanted to do for further learning and work. However the programme was less likely (45%) to have effected their GCSE decisionmaking.
- Students were more aware of the types of jobs and career paths available through local employers; 84% of students reported they learned a lot about local jobs and employers through GYTE.

- 75% of teachers surveyed were more confident about offering career advice after participating in GYTE.
- GYTE helped foster employer engagement; all employers were interested in continuing their support to both the schools and the programme.

Stakeholders believed that GYTE could improve by 1) increasing the amount of employer engagement between pupils and employers and 2) enabling the type of placements that can help develop curriculum teaching.

## Discussion

Key discussions for the programme are based on recruitment; communication; 'interaction for students;' and reflection or 'capping off' the programme.

**Recruitment.** Recruiting employers, schools and teachers are an important part of the programme process. It is important that schools and employers are eager, engaged and understand the value of a programme of this type.

- Employers and organisations that can provide teachers with interesting, hands on externship days should be recruited.
- Schools that are interested in the programme should commit to provide support at the SLT level.
- Teachers interested in career education and employer engagement should be given priority for externship placement.

**Communication.** Communication is key to maintaining programme success. Teachers felt the programme was managed well by the Edge Foundation and by the employer but were less likely to believe the school managed the programme well. Communication protocols for employers, schools and teachers are important and particular attention must be paid to communication between the school and teachers.

**Engagement for students.** Many students made explicit comments about wanting to have visited the businesses themselves and seen the workspace, the jobs and employees in action, or more indirectly by suggesting the programme should be more interactive. The Edge Foundation could think about how to practically get groups of students into businesses to interact directly with employees and then share this learning with their fellow students. One school worked with their placement provider to support work placements for the winning team. This could be one of several ways to boost employer engagement.

**Capping off the programme.** The Edge Foundation could think about adding further reflective components to the overall GYTE programme to embed learning and to add value to the programme offer.

## Recommendations

We have developed four practical recommendations for the programme moving forward:

- The creation of guidelines around teacher selection for GYTE for schools.
- A workshop of set of guidelines for schools and employers about making the most of the externship time as well as some recommendations on how to create a good externship experience within business.
- Further development of training materials and resources on how to build activities out of the internship experience.
- Create opportunities for teachers to get together. There may be an opportunity to set up an online space or physical space for teachers to reflect and share their learning.

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