

Rethinking Employability – preparing young people for the future of work
4th May 2021 Webinar
Chat Summary

Links and further information

- Edge run a network supporting islands to use their independent position to test out new approaches in this area -
<https://www.edge.co.uk/research/research-networks/island-education-network/>
- Information: Excelerate initiative from The Wood Foundation
<https://www.thewoodfoundation.org.uk/developing-young-people-in-scotland/excelerate/> Excelerate is a curriculum-based initiative being piloted at Alford, Kemnay, Banff, and Portlethen Academies harnessing the power of partnerships in creating authentic, meaningful, and impactful learning opportunities.
- Book written by Martin Illingworth, Forget School: Why young people are succeeding on their own terms and what schools can do to avoid being left behind.
<https://www.independentthinkingpress.com/books/teachingskills/forget-school/>
- Event link to 'Young Lives Young Futures'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fa7tTzhIUH0>
- A guide to employer engagements in education from Edge
https://www.edge.co.uk/documents/138/Edge_employer_engagement_guide.pdf
- A programme to prepare young people for a more sustainable future.
<https://routes2resilience.org/educators/>
- Virtual internships for High School students
<https://www.virtualinternships.com/the-vi-foundation-program-high-school-internships/>

- A resource for young people highlighting some of the hidden career models at work in the Lakes and Dales. <https://createyourfuture.me.uk>
- Village Network providing access to networks <https://www.lvn.org.uk/>
- Developing young people's employability by empowering them to tackle real-life social problems. <https://www.envision.org.uk>
- Resources for education and employer partnerships: <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/professional-development/technical-education/teach/teach-too-resources/>
- Showcasing the opportunities Engineering & Manufacturing have to offer. <https://engenuity.org/stackathon/>
- Engenuity report highlighting the digital skills gap <https://engenuity.org/news/disconnected-impending-digital-skills-disaster/>
- Example of collaboration in the Engineering sector <https://www.engineeringuk.com/our-programmes/tomorrows-engineers-code/>
- Edge Future Learning training <https://www.edge.co.uk/edge-future-learning/>
- <https://www.edge.co.uk/edge-future-learning/efl-training/>
- Edge Network <https://www.edge.co.uk/join-our-network/>
- Edge event Rethinking Education with a keynote from Kate Green MP <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/assessment-time-for-a-rethink-in-discussion-with-kate-green-mp-tickets-151060671535>
- Help students build a free digital record of achievement, track 8 key soft skills, and connect with employers. www.upskillme.io

Discussion Highlights

'Soft Skills' and alternative terminology

- Employability skills which is all about developing a positive, "can do, want to do" attitude, punctuality, attendance, keen to learn. Ensuring young people have an informed choice from school onwards.
- Critical skills are fundamental life skills and are all critical across all of the pathways and journeys in life.
- Not calling the foundations for life 'soft skills'. We need to help young people develop this life functionality, the resilience, the ability to communication and to see digital tools as an aid to life and not instead of - worked on GNVQs, development of the Diplomas and we are still not focusing on allowing young people to get a broad based education, but too much focus on qualification without the need to realise that paper does not competence make!
- In Scotland the 'soft skills' are called Meta Skills and provide a really good framework (developed by SDS) for the skills and behaviours young people will need in the world of work.
- Prince's Trust have programmes for young people 16 (post year 11) - 30 years who are NEET. Building on the "soft skills" and employability skills, leading into workplace experience and support into training / employment. princestrustne@princes-trust.org.uk
- High level careers advice tends to stereotype employers and occupational sectors. Many employers are now looking at recruitment into their broader workforce and people understanding how their transferable critical skills can be adapted to new circumstances. Skills Bridge work is showing how recognising these skills can help people become more resilient to change.
- Discourse around youth unemployability always includes "experience" and "transferable skills", but not many businesses /companies / organisations allow young people to gain experience and if they do, it's for young people who already have high attainment or are on track for high attainment. The gap for those distanced from work life/employment is getting bigger and bigger.
- Human (soft) skills are the bridge between education & the world of work. This can empower students beyond the curriculum. Skills also link to the fourth industrial revolution & the WEF statement that 65% of primary school students will be doing jobs which haven't been invented yet.

Careers

- Careers, resilience, foundation skills need to be delivered much earlier and leaving it to 15-16 years of age is too late. Role models / careers needs to be part of subject delivery and not separate - so primary delivery should see how the subject delivered relates to the world around them and moving education out of classrooms and using the resource of the real world.
- Careers is the curriculum and until career is fully integrated into the curriculum we will never ever crack this nut. It's not just a case that young people need to know the skills employers are looking for but also other education professionals need to understand these skills too. BUT also they need to understand how these skills are developed within and outside of the curriculum - this is the crucial piece. Listing the skills employers need is not enough, young people need to understand how they are developed and supported to develop them
- Have we missed a trick with the T Level Assessment Strategy, which focuses on high stakes knowledge exams rather than assessing mind-sets and transferable skills? With the Industry placement, so much more employability development could have been embedded but our teachers have to focus on knowledge and retrieval practices.
- Careers is moving slowly in the right direction, Gatsby and so on. The FE white paper actually talks about Careers, and we are all awaiting the new Careers Strategy... Huge amounts of passion and work takes place, but more funding is needed across the board. FE Colleges have huge numbers of students to work with and we innovate and drive forward, but more funding to support this is needed. The FE White paper talks about the National Careers Service, in its current format this won't help, as it is in effect a postcode lottery, so we await the new strategy and see what comes from it...

Apprenticeships and Equity of opportunity

- It's a shame all the apprenticeship, working experience or even mentoring opportunities isn't in a big database for students to look at.
- A league table based on broader destination options would be great. Where apprenticeship and self-employment carry equal value to Oxbridge/HEI places. The problem is that our school system is used to measure too many different aims, one of which is exams achievement as it is a simple way to measure an education system. Surely equity of opportunity, destination and progression is the best measure of an education system?
- It's not just teachers; employers arbitrarily ask for a degree level education for mid/ senior roles. As parents and students look up to where their career might lead, they see this – how can we ask them to believe in parity of esteem so long as this remains the case.
- The rail and construction sector needs fresh talent and to reflect the diversity of the communities. Big up apprenticeships!
- Databases work locally, but you need the quality brokers who know what works for the student / employer and it is not simply a matter of choosing. It needs to work for both student and employer and be managed - employers not just left to host a student for a fortnight who did not want to be there and had received no preparation from the school, preparation that should have been robust and embedded in school delivery. As regards apprenticeships these are often not the easy route that students are lead to believe and require a great deal of work, but many employers / training providers now want students at Level 2 and after 11 years of compulsory education many are not able to reach this level - big issue re. why schooling is failing to get student to this basic level
- If apprenticeships are asking for experiences, does this create an uneven playing field for those from disadvantaged backgrounds- is there another way employers could assess skills i.e. through response to case studies/situational questions rather than competency based?
- There are many great initiatives out there trying to support students, but it is not aligned, everyone is reinventing the wheel, not enough funding is secured and there is no one-stop shop for who is doing what nationally to prepare students for the future
- One of the key elements of apprenticeships is the mentor/novice relationship and it develops so many great skills in people
- Flexi- apprenticeships and return to ATA models might help with some SME engagement. Also perhaps engagement with local chambers or

Business in the Community Groups can help aggregate the employer interface.

Digital learning

- We should not underestimate the power of social media and technology here, young people are exposed more than ever to information, capitalising on that and we can support them in a smarter way
- As regards information, do we make the assumption that young people really know how to use this information and that although they use digital communication platforms, they are not using them effectively and often struggle with where to start. All of this needs to start in primary and not secondary - sow the seeds, fertilise the ideas and then harvest.

Project Based Learning

- Everyone who likes project based learning should watch 'Most Likely to Succeed' to see the story of High Tech High in California. Really inspiring.
- High Tech High are one of our Edges key partners and free introductory training in Project Based Learning is available - <https://www.edge.co.uk/edge-future-learning/efl-training/>
- Let's make the schools social hubs - get all of the community to use them as hubs to improve, educate and get social mobility back up to the top of the agenda. It takes a community to make the real difference and we are not using resources to the fullest or addressing the gaps in parents, social mobility, poor schooling and talking about the paths there are, is not talking about many who are struggling on the mud and others that walk on the marble of education and attainment.
- Applied learning with teams of teachers acting as project management groups drawn from maths, English, science, languages, technical and arts etc. Every project requires multi-discipline learning and helps to connect understanding with application. Tick off the exam curriculum boxes along the way. What an interesting daily timetable that would be and if too much to face then introduce at KS4 and beyond

Role Models and Mentoring

- Role models need to be selected carefully, relationships need to be developed and the interaction needs to be ongoing. You can't parachute in an alumni or celebrity and expect that to inspire aspirations.
- Getting young people speaking to other young people as role models; this is exactly what YAAN lives and breathes.
- It's the same issue I find with mentoring. Mentoring is extremely beneficial, but it needs to be the right people - not just anyone. The way I like to explain it is that you cannot just have any therapist/counsellor, they need to be the right one for you.
- Sutton Trust did research on mentoring found that, without the right measure in place, it can cause more harm than good!

- Contextual learning is remembered and valued.
- Teachers cannot be the answer for everything.