

Embedding careers education in initial teacher education (ITE)

Introduction

We know we need a more relevant, responsive and resilient education system; the challenge is how to achieve this. Placing careers more centrally in schools has so much to offer. It enables children to locate themselves in the world; it provides a ladder of social opportunity for young people. Careers education unlocks the potential of teachers by offering them a wider perspective to sustain their vocation and commitment.

There is a clear rationale for integrating careers education more centrally into curriculum planning. It can bring the curriculum to life, engage teachers and students with the real world, and allow young people and teachers to build their vocational networks and harness their social capital to make the most of them. It can also become a vehicle for teachers to connect with their purpose and sense of themselves as a leader in the classroom and beyond. We wanted to bring this alive in the learning experience of our trainee teachers.

From November 2023 to July 2024, 26 Secondary PGCE students at the University of Worcester elected to follow an 'Enhancement Activity' in Careers Education. This was the outcome of a collaborative innovation between University of Worcester, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) / Worcester Children's First, The Edge Foundation and the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), all of whom have a strategic interest in high quality careers education. We left our egos at the door, galvanised around this key idea and integrated it into our own strategies. We created a micro-ecosystem of support for Kim Hibbert-Mayne, the Course Leader who in turn bought out the very best in the cohort.

We believe this is pioneering work, so we wanted to lay down the path we have taken and learnings that are emerging. Kim Hibbert-Mayne has produced this toolkit for the Edge Practice website that will be of use to PGCE tutors, teachers and school leaders. We share the resource bank used, and the lessons learned so that those engaged in Initial Teacher Education can use these resources to plan their own programmes.

This is the start of our own journey in this area. We, like our students, are in a process of becoming. So please use this resource however it helps and feedback to us your own learning. Our shared intention here is for teachers to feel fully resourced, from a deeper sense of purpose that will, we hope, anchor them when things get tough and shape their contribution as their careers develop. As one participant concluded, rather profoundly, in his reflection: *'This doesn't seem like the end of the Programme; it feels like the beginning of a much deeper journey of self-discovery.'*

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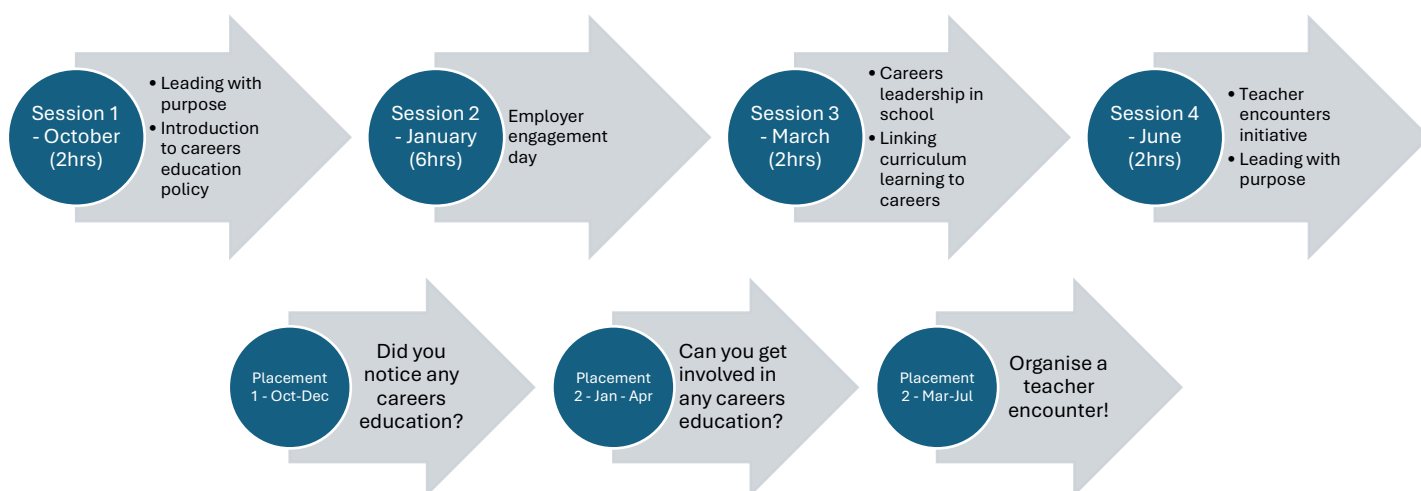
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Programme overview

Here we lay-out how the 12hrs of university time was used, and how the trainee teachers were directed to use their time on placement in secondary schools between sessions.



Programme aims

- Learn about careers education structure, policy and key guidance.
- Develop leadership skills:
 - knowledge & skills
 - professional networks
 - purpose & vision
- Explore academic and vocational pathways.
- Consider learning opportunities within subject curriculums.

Programme content and commentary

You can access the slide deck and the programme's accompanying resources in this [Master files link](#). These files contain the Powerpoint slides for all four sessions, and their accompanying handouts which we make reference to throughout this commentary. We outline what we did, why we did it and any learning that emerged from each of the significant elements of the programme. We use the session bullet points from the above diagram to structure our reflections and each finishes with soundbites from trainee teachers who took part in the programme.

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Session 1 (2hrs): *Leading with purpose introduction* – See session 1, slides 8-16

Leadership development for careers

The programme attempted to integrate leadership development into the introductory session as well as the final session where we reflected upon our journeys and evaluated the process. We believe the early input around leadership allowed the trainee teachers to engage with deeper levels of maturity and a sense of responsibility. They started to consider themselves not as passive, but as active agents of change in their institutions. We noticed their confidence grow as they questioned their assumptions of hierarchical leadership and stepped into a consideration of themselves as 'teacher leaders'.

Purpose, Social capital and Social Capital

We then spent time in the first session exploring 'purpose', as a means of increasing our own resilience and providing self-regulation and coping strategies to enable us to persist with challenging tasks as leaders (Yeager et al., 2014). Once the trainee teachers had explored the concept of purpose (see slide 8-12), they then completed a 'purpose measure' (see 'Purpose measure worksheet') adapted from a validated tool used in empirical research (Summers & Falco, 2020). We reflected on how this activity could also be used by teachers

with pupils when providing guidance around careers. It highlights any misalignments between goals and aspirations, and where we are spending our time and effort.

The session then introduced the trainee teachers to the concept of ‘social capital’, and the impact our social networks have on all aspects of life (slides 13-16). We were able to provide case studies of pupils whose aspirations were achieved because of the contacts that teachers or other significant others had introduced them to. Having completed a social capital tracker (see ‘Social capital tracking worksheet’), the trainee teachers reflected on how some of their most valuable connections in terms of their goals, and specifically their careers, were not always close family members with whom we associated ‘strong’ relationships, but ‘weak’ acquaintances that they may have never even met.

During the programme the trainee teachers will inevitably broaden their networks, and these networks could in turn become the networks of all of the pupils they will have contact with in schools. It is well known that careers education can promote equity and social mobility, by helping young people break through glass ceilings of disadvantage. We encouraged the trainee teachers to be intentional about social capital throughout this programme, as this is what helps us build our networks and also students to be more aware of how to build a successful career. After all, it’s not ‘what’ you know but ‘who’ you know that accounts for the success of young people (Freeland Fisher, 2018) and the careers agenda is the best place to bring this alive in schools.

Introduction to careers education and policy – See session 1, slides 17-20

The first session of the programme then aimed to introduce the trainee teachers to some of the key documents and policies around careers education in secondary schools. We started by using comparisons between what might have happened in schools when the trainee teachers were pupils, to what should happen in schools today. Throughout these conversations and as the programme progressed, the socio-economic importance of careers education, and the statutory guidance’s recommendations were reinforced.

The trainee teachers felt empowered to think critically about previous, current and future arrangements for careers education, already noticing the difference between what needs to happen, what can happen and what does happen. Their awareness of careers education policy gave them a self-efficacy going into placements and future sessions, equipped with the terminology and vision needed to engage with the up-and-coming opportunities and external speakers.

‘I was inspired to focus my first assignment around social capital, and how we can build this through our curriculums.’

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Session 2 – 6hrs: *Employer engagement day* – See session 2, slides 22-31

The Gatsby Benchmarks and research conducted by various careers education organisations highlight the absolute importance of pupils encountering workplaces, employees and workplaces. Maya Angelou’s famous quote ‘You can’t be, what you can’t see’ was used by a speaker during the introduction of the day, linking the trainee teachers back to the concept of social capital which was introduced during the first session (see session 1, slides 13-16).

The employer engagement day would have been difficult to arrange without the contacts this project’s network provided. Worcestershire’s LEP and the CEC contributed to a day which put employers in the centre of careers education strategy. The trainee teachers were informed about the local economic and careers landscape before they heard about the CEC’s strategic priorities. These were laid out as strategic ‘shifts’ which resonated with the trainee teachers’ earlier observations of the difference in what should, could and does happen in careers provision.

The trainee teachers then heard first-hand, about the importance of engaging with employers, and also how keen employers are to work with schools. The talks from various employers (see slides 25-28) increased their awareness of both academic and vocational pathways. Knowing that the trainee teachers were from different subject disciplines, speakers attempted to refer to the value of different academic subjects, and also the transferable skills and qualities that teachers can develop in pupils, to then bring to the workforce. It was amazing to see the trainee teachers so passionate when linking their subjects to the work of an international engineering firm and this vision and purpose continued into the mini-employer fayre which also provided the trainee teachers with an opportunity to exercise their networking skills as future leaders.

'This really developed my knowledge around local careers and the apprenticeships available'

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Session 3 – 2 hrs: Careers Leadership in School

Talk from a careers lead – See session 3, slide 32-34.

The contact we had within the local careers hub, led to the invitation of a careers lead from one of the University's partnership high schools to talk to the trainee teachers about their role. While some of the trainee teacher had noticed who the careers lead was in the first placement school, and some had even worked with them on some occasions, this talk ensured that all of the trainee teachers encountered the pivotal work of a careers lead in school.

It was great that the trainee teachers were already familiar with some of the policy and strategy that the careers lead shared, but one of the key messages that really resonated with all of us was that the careers lead felt that one of their main barriers was getting careers into subject classrooms. This resonated with the trainee teachers who engaged in conversations about what they had noticed during their first placement in schools. We used questions on slide 34 to stimulate conversation around what is happening in schools and the trainee teachers noticed that, despite linking curriculum learning to careers being so important (Gatsby benchmark 4), this was rarely seen in their subject classrooms. This led perfectly into open and creative table discussions about how the trainee teachers could weave careers education into their curriculums.

'This developed my knowledge and understanding of the Gatsby Benchmarks in practice.'

Linking curriculum learning to careers – See session 3, slides 35-45

The rest of the third session was spent thought-showering ideas for linking subject curriculums with careers education. The trainee teachers discussed many inspirational ideas and the challenges they face embedding these ideas as future teachers and leaders. The trainee teachers reported back to their subject groups and tutors which fuelled the University's Department for Secondary and Further Education and Skills annual practitioner magazine 'UW Source'. The department were inspired by the work of this project and wanted to centre the magazine's third edition around careers education. The trainee teachers on the programme were either directly involved or received a copy, along with every other trainee teacher in the wider cohort, as well as 100's of leaders and initial teacher training mentors in partnership schools. A copy of the magazine can be found in the Master files link [here](#).

The magazine's launch celebrated the progress the department had made in terms of this publication but also, the enhancement activity, the additional workshops that were put on around careers education for the wider cohorts, the changes to the curriculum in several subject programmes, and importantly the development of the trainee teachers' individual sense of purpose in careers education. Not only was there a raised sense of awareness and value, the trainee teachers were also equipped with a plethora of ways to be proactive in their work moving forward, particularly in linking their curriculum learning to careers.

'I now include a 'careers slide' in Powerpoints relevant to the topic being taught'

'I included careers in my lesson on Non-fiction writing to argue and persuade.'

'I planned a SoW based on the career of a book illustrator and contributed to the department's magazine.'

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Session 4 (2hrs): Leading with purpose review – See session 4, slides 51-57

In the final session, it was important to spend time reflecting on our learning journeys. We used a 'Careers critical timeline' (included in the Master files) to stimulate these reflections and discussions. Identifying how our own social capital had grown through the activities that we had taken part in so far, provided the trainee teachers with the purpose and motivation to express an interest in the additional 'teacher encounters' initiative which was launched during this final session.

A 'circle time' activity saw each of the trainee teachers exploring how they wanted to continue to make their individual, but powerful contributions to careers education and guidance, social mobility and the lives of young people. These were reflected in commitments that they made to themselves on postcards to conclude the programme. We will send these out to the new, early career teachers, in the middle of this academic year.

'Each session has also been designed to inform us on careers education in schools and it has inspired us all to think about what impact we will have on young people and their future careers.'

'Actionable ideas, well paced throughout the course, interesting and engaging content. Great guest speakers and the Mazak tour was eye opening and enriching.'

Additional activities

Placement activities – See 'Placement provision worksheet'

The trainee teachers were asked to 'notice' aspects of careers education during placement 1 (Oct – Dec). At a stage where they are new to the profession and developing their craft, we did not think it was appropriate to task them with seeking out the careers lead or the school's careers strategy and provision. However, they were to make a note of careers if they came across it.

They compared their observations with each other and with the information provided by the careers lead during the third session in university. The trainee teachers were then tasked to be a little more proactive during their second, longer placement (Jan – Jun), finding out who the careers lead was, what the school's strategy was, and to get involved wherever possible in careers-related activities.

'I attended a careers fair and helped students talk to universities. I made a display in my classroom for those who could not attend.'

'I went on a school trip to the National Space Centre and had discussions around careers in STEM. This gave me more practise speaking with students and staff about careers.'

Teacher Encounter initiative

The final, optional learning experience that the trainee teachers were offered was the opportunity to be excused from one day on placement to take part in a 'Teacher encounter'. This initiative is described within the UW Source magazine which is included in the Master files link [here](#). See pages 44-55. You can see how we introduced this to the trainee teachers during the fourth and final session, slides 48-50.

Review of project

This project is an attempt to seed new practice that invites educators to place careers education more centrally in school development, curriculum and lesson planning. By working with new entrants and encouraging them to see the potential of the careers agenda we are also enabling them to think in a bigger, more integrated way recognising that from the moment they step into the profession they have a stake in it and can make their unique contribution.

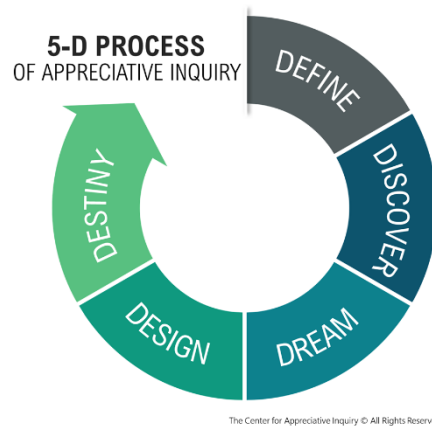
It is hard to capture the impact of the work we do as teacher educators. In this instance, the known impact of the Careers Education Enhancement Activity ranges from individual trainee teachers taking an interest in careers education while on placement, to colleagues on the PGCE Secondary team creating time in their already over-stretched programmes to discuss careers education with their wider cohorts. Below, we outline two of the unique elements of our approach that contributed to the trainee teachers' experience.

Establishing a Collaborative Innovation Group

A critical success factor of this project, which could have been easily overlooked, was the convening of a collaborative innovation network around this project that worked to build a field to underpin its success.

	Our Collaborative Innovation Group
Judy Gibb	Director of Skills at Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership.
Cassie Cramer	Edge Employer Engagement and Education Manager
Julie Sutton	Principal Lecturer – Primary Lead for School Based Provision
Charlotte Ross	Lecturer PGCE, Teaching and Learning Coordinator and lead for PGCE Enhancement: PSHE
Kim Hibbert-Mayne	Senior Lecturer in Secondary Education
Jane Owens	Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education
Rachel Paige	Deputy Head of the Institute of Education
Shaun McNerney	School Effectiveness Team, Institute of Education
Liz Phillips-Rennie	Education Manager Development and Standards, Careers and Enterprise Company

We met three times from March to July 2023 to connect, align our common strategic interests and collaboratively plan the programme. We used an appreciative inquiry 5-D process across these three meetings to shape our approach:



In later meetings, we established a network of support, commitment and shared ownership, continually asking: What might this look like in Primary/Secondary? What else would be useful to you at this stage? What support and help might be useful from the group as you move forward?

The collaborative innovation group provided a stable base of support as it allowed relationships to develop and co-creation and shared ownership to evolve. While responsibility for design and delivery lay with the University, there was a shared commitment to make it work that was supported by the strategic priorities in all organisations.

The time spent establishing these relationships meant it was relatively easy to give the trainee teachers access to the best external speakers e.g. Worcestershire LEP, CEC, the counties 'cornerstone' employers, careers leads from school (See session 2 & 3 of the Master slide deck).

The equality in the group fostered innovation. The idea that students could do a teacher externship emerged from the group, and this was comprehensively supported by the Worcestershire LEP and CEC (See session 4).

Engagement of the CEC who shared their national level strategy helped us align our approach with future practice.

Initially we engaged both Primary and Secondary colleagues. While there was an appetite in Primary ITE it proved challenging to carve out capacity to integrate it into the programme; though the aspiration remains and there is continued interest.

Integrating leadership development for careers leaders

The project was framed around purpose because we wanted to use leadership development as a way of encouraging the trainee teachers to think more deeply about their own role and contribution as educators. This imperative stems from the School Effectiveness Team within the University of Worcester, who work with school leaders to build conditions and capabilities for innovation and system improvement.

We wanted to encourage teacher leadership: *'educators enacting influence through relationships beyond the scope of their own classroom that result in changes in pupil learning, professional practices and/or organisational outcomes (Mackay et al 2022)*. From this perspective all teachers are leaders and well placed to innovate in their classrooms and beyond. This is evident in their contributions to UW Source magazine which is available to teachers in UW partner schools across the region.

Concluding thoughts

Through the programme we wanted the trainee teachers to appreciate that careers education deserves this central place because it can make its own contribution to three systemic challenges: Promoting equity and social mobility; Making the curriculum more relevant; and supporting teacher engagement and retention.

We face an engagement challenge in our schools, evidenced by record low attendance and increasing home-schooling. A vibrant and carefully integrated careers education strategy offers a way of innovating the curriculum to restore relevance by helping young people locate themselves in an ever-changing world.

In a world of accelerating change, we **all** need to step up and lead within the roles we have. This project has enabled intending teachers to give themselves permission to see themselves as leaders who ground their practice in their own sense of purpose and commitment to equity and social mobility. This is important at a time when over 40% of the profession leave within 10 years (UK Parliament 2023).

We hope the learning within this enhancement activity will help this cohort find their place within the profession and make their unique contribution to it.

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