



TEACH TOO ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A case study on the Teach Too organisational development project at RNN Group



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The RNN Group Teach Too bid focussed on the organisational development of practice related to curriculum design and planning; specifically, how this could be better informed through long term, meaningful relationships with local employers and partners.

The ambition was to establish Curriculum Innovation Hubs in two pilot areas which would be centred on the Teach Too principles of collaboration and co-design. The Curriculum Innovation Hub model encompasses a variety of representatives from staff to learners, employers, awarding bodies and wider stakeholders. Through structured collaboration opportunities, these groups of people would review curricula and share sector-specific expertise, which would result in the development of an employer-led and skills-rich curriculum and technical education offer.

Through long-term partnerships with the stakeholders in each Curriculum Innovation Hub, it is our goal that we enable all delivery staff to consistently access dual professionalism activities which will better inform the design and delivery of curriculum and ultimately, benefit all learners to fulfil their individual potential.

Through the Teach Too project, we have piloted our Curriculum Innovation Hub model within two curriculum areas at our Rotherham campus; Digital and Catering and Hospitality.

Project aims

The Curriculum Innovation Hub model aimed to explore the methods by which the following activities could take place;

- curriculum innovation and design (including delivery, assessment and Higher Education opportunities)
- improvement of dual professionalism (including training opportunities for employer staff e.g. skills swap)
- active engagement of learners (with a focus on raising aspirations) through industry placements, masterclasses, workshops etc.
- informing quality and standards (through liaison with awarding organisations)
- sharing practice and raising awareness (through showcase events for curriculum areas and businesses, including local authority and LEP representatives)

Each Hub would be formed on the principles of co-design and innovation in order to increase opportunities for staff, employers, learners, awarding bodies, universities and voluntary agencies to co-create industry-standard and localised provision which;

- raises learner and community aspirations
- develops a broad set of employability skills relevant to industry
- supports business growth (including training and development of staff / apprentices)
- provides routes to higher level employment opportunities

Positive impact and expected outcomes

- 8 academic and technical education delivery staff (four in each Hub), have updated their professional skills and knowledge in industry settings. This was as a direct result of the gaps identified in the curriculum review, specifically surrounding; cyber security, cloud based programmes, rural catering and how integrated artificial intelligence technologies in cooking machinery are leading advancements in the industry. The result of this activity is now seeing staff translate their learning to students through curriculum planning and task design. In the very early stages, anecdotal feedback from staff demonstrates high levels of motivation, newly developed teaching, learning and assessment approaches and greater connectivity of learning tasks to the skills and knowledge required in the world of work.
- Specialist skills and knowledge gained in Computing have included: developed understanding of networking based roles and requirements in the sector (including those focussed around the latest internet technologies) and improving knowledge and skills related to web design and internet marketing activity (particularly from the perspective of small-medium size organisations).
- For Catering staff, time spent in industry has resulted in; developing understanding of a greater range of cuisine, including specialist cultural techniques and dishes, improved knowledge of Electronic Point Of Sales (EPOS) systems and further understanding of large scale catering in a fast paced environment.
- Through regularly and systematically sharing the aims of the project and the developing ideas and outcomes, staff across the Group have fed back positively about the vision and direction of the college curriculum and technical education offer. All Curriculum Managers are keen to establish Hubs in their areas and a majority of academic staff have commented that they feel the model will provide greater structure to enable dual professionalism activities and sustained employer engagement. Those not working in teaching and learning roles have commented that they feel a greater level of understanding of the vision of the organisation and feel positive about the collaborative culture which is being fostered locally.
- For the 122 students who have been directly involved and who have benefitted from the project, we have seen an improvement in the individual confidence levels they

“Through working closely with RMBC, I’m gaining knowledge and understanding of their web development process and how a move to online systems will impact a diverse selection of users. This enables me to provide real-life scenarios in my teaching to better prepare learners for progression into the workplace.”

**T. Wilding,
Programme Leader,
Computing**

“The Catering & Hospitality industry offers several, diverse pathways into the sector and through close working relationships with employers, I have widened my personal awareness of local opportunities for our students and have been able to innovate our curriculum offer by incorporating specialist skills and experiences which will set our learners apart from other candidates in a competitive job market.”

**D. Foden, Curriculum
Team Leader,
Catering & Hospitality**

have regarding the skills they are developing on programme and how these will support them to achieve their career aspirations. Evidence from the baseline and completion student surveys demonstrate that the most skills development overall has been in the Catering department (see Fig 1). Level 3 learners in Computing have also consistently improved in all areas of skill development (see Fig 2).

Fig.1

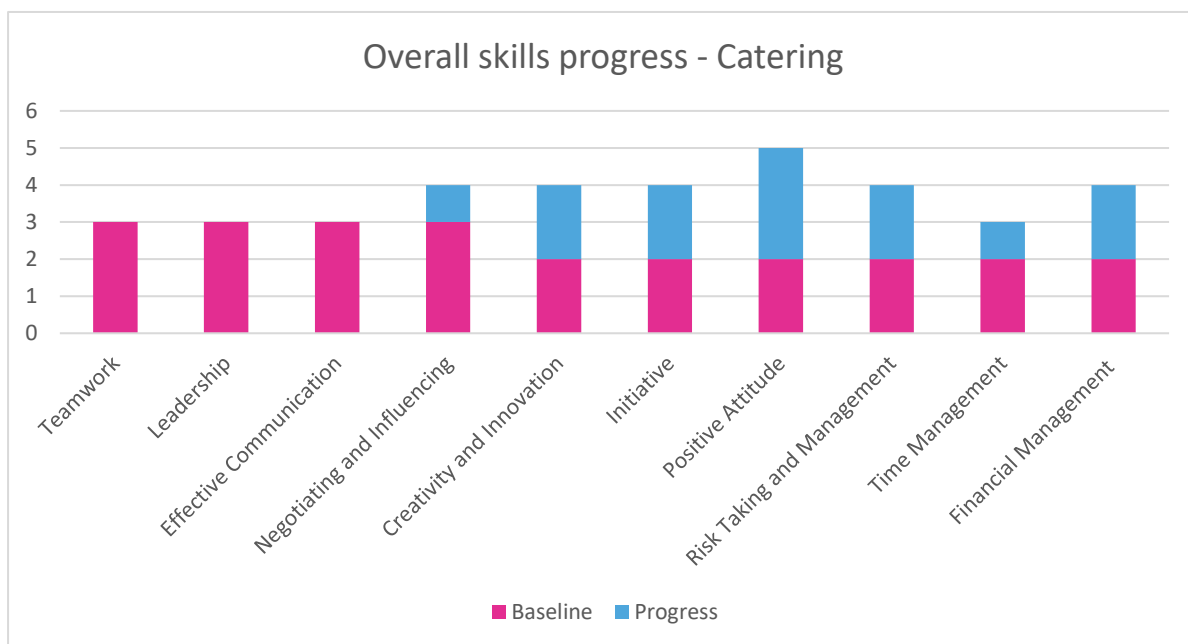
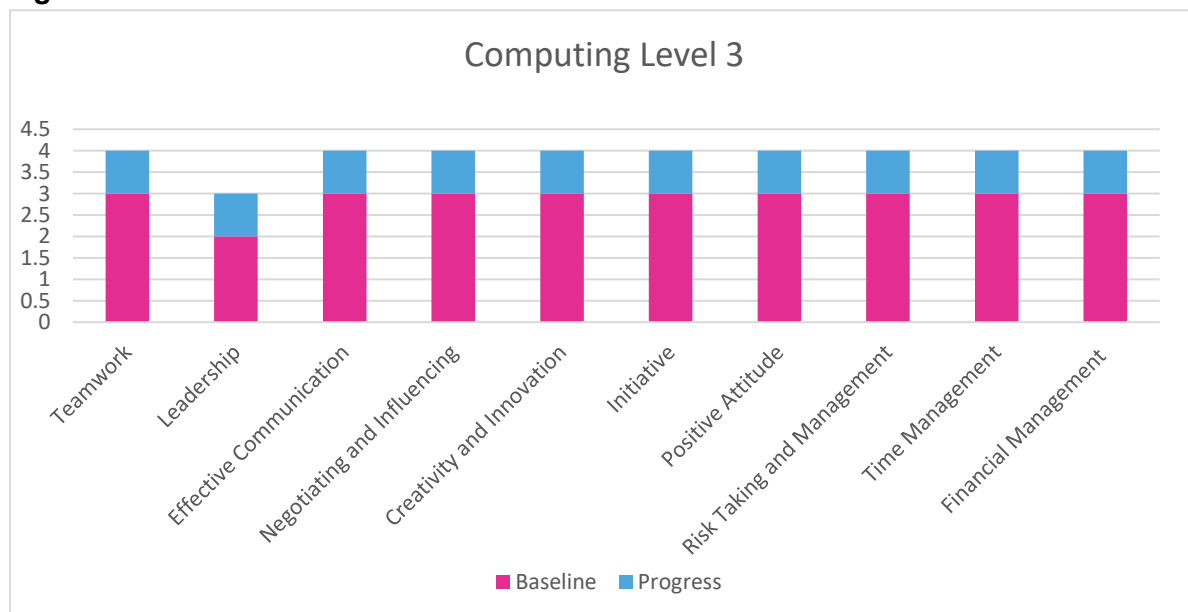


Fig. 2

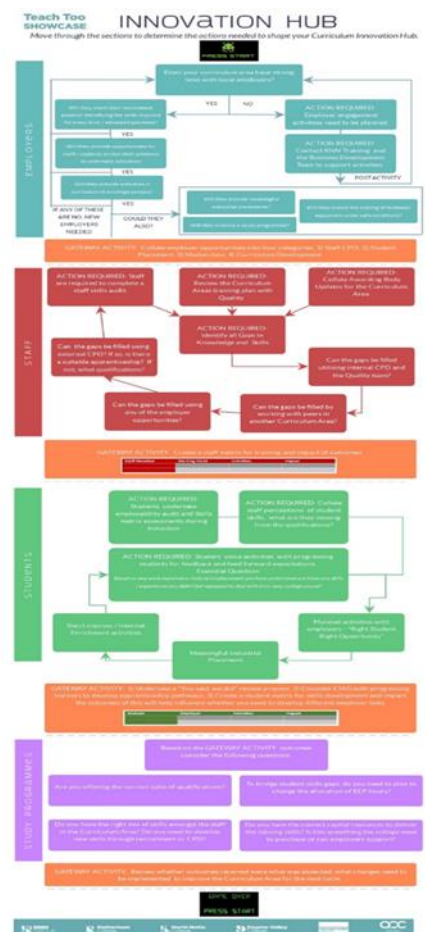


Whilst the above cannot be wholly attributed to Teach Too activities alone, it can be recognised that these have played a significant contributing factor to this improvement given the timeline of the survey feedback. Based upon this information and the positive anecdotal feedback we have received from learners, all curriculum areas will be working with employers over the summer of 2019 to further develop their existing skills matrix in order to reflect the real tasks and challenges faced in industry.

It is our ambition that all curriculum skills matrices will be employer-endorsed by September 2019. Early indications of embedding time for students to reflect and plan for the development of employer-led skills in tutorials, has shown greater levels of motivation towards learning, improved reflective skills and better quality target setting, which is supporting progress in terms of overall achievement.

“I think working with employers during my qualification is a good way for me to understand better what I need to secure my first digital role. By getting involved in the Teach Too project, I’ve realised that not only technical skills are important, but softer skills too, such as communication skills and team working.”
Rory Thackery, Level 3 Computing student

- The approach fostered across the Group to develop Curriculum Innovation Hubs has seen greater levels of collaboration between departments. This has resulted in the development of new tools and resources to support curriculum purchase, planning and design. Materials which have been developed include; the Curriculum Innovation Hub Process map (a working guide to promote reflection, discussion and action required to establish a Hub), Effective Employer Engagement Toolkit (including hints, tips, collaborative working agreement templates, expression of interest forms and case study templates) and staff and learner skills surveys which can be adapted to the specifics of each curriculum area. These materials are being trialled and tested in our current curriculum planning process and will be formalised for 2019/20 across all curriculum areas.
- The two awarding bodies engaged in Curriculum Innovation Hubs have thanked staff for their open and honest approach to curriculum review and have appreciated the opportunity to hear about, input to and observe our approach to curriculum planning. This has



improved delivery staff understanding and awareness of the qualifications being developed by the awarding organisations, the information on which decisions are being made and how these factors connect to our local needs.

Equally, the awarding bodies have fed back a great deal of interest in hearing how staff are interpreting their qualifications, any barriers and challenges and how these may be overcome. These greater levels of collaboration are currently influencing our curriculum purchase and planning.

- Twenty senior leaders and governors have lent their support to the project and its progress towards the organisation's mission and vision. This has included commitments made to ensure all staff benefit from dual professionalism activities (which are formally recorded as CPD) annually and to re-imagine our curriculum purchase and planning process aligned to the principals of Curriculum Innovation Hubs. Whilst the project has been short in terms of practical delivery time, what we have achieved are several tried and tested small changes which are planned to have a big impact across the organisation moving forwards.
- Forty employers have engaged with Curriculum Innovation Hubs so far. This has been made up of engagement at varying levels, including; holding exploratory discussions and meetings to co-design their commitment and support, regularly attending curriculum review workshops to unpick the purpose, delivery and impact of our provision, delivering masterclasses to develop specialist skills with staff and learners and providing real-time learning projects to learners and giving critical feedback on their work. Positive impacts have been far-reaching, including; the wider skill development of staff and learners, particularly in terms of subject specialist skills which are not covered as part of the standard curriculum; re-invigorated teaching and learning sessions based upon real-time challenges faced by employers, and raised levels of learner confidence and engagement.

"The ultimate aim for a student should not just be to gain a qualification but to develop the right skills to start and progress their career. By working with employers, both students and staff can become better informed and inspired about local industry, opportunities and skills valued in the workplace. This will benefit all parties."

**Jennie Watts,
Employability and
Skills Advisor, RMBC**

"In order to meet our aims, we're providing opportunities for staff to refresh their knowledge of their professional industry, as well as actively inviting employers to meet with our learners to develop skills in specialist areas."

**Jason Austin,
Interim Principal**

Impact and Future activity

Given the short time frame of the project, it is too early to measure impact on learner outcomes at this stage, however based upon a significant amount of activity, qualitative impact upon staff has been achieved, along with strategic developments in the organisation. The following changes demonstrate progress as a direct result of the Teach Too programme:

- Strategic senior leadership commitment to dual professionalism activities which will be formally recorded via the internal HR platform on each employees individual record
- Shifts in the pastoral support model will include greater reflection and planning time for students to develop the skills required by employers (as identified in the curriculum area skills matrix)
- Implementation of the Curriculum Innovation Hub model across all curriculum areas on all sites of RNN Group colleges, beginning in September 2019. This will result in increased and improved employer engagement practice which will have direct impact upon the learning experiences of over 2,000 learners.
- A shift in organisational culture and development, with a focus on locally informed curriculum, long term and sustainable partnerships with employers and investment in staff and learner skills development.

"I'm very keen to roll out Curriculum Innovation Hubs in my areas. This work is taking us in a really positive direction towards delivering teaching and learning which focusses on the careers and skills needed by our local employers."

J Young, Curriculum Manager, Visual and Performing Arts

Recommendations for developing collaborative arrangements

Whilst the pilot phase of the Curriculum Innovation Hub model has been small, a key lesson learnt in terms of developing collaborative arrangements, is that quality over quantity really matters. Whilst it can seem more beneficial to have a greater number of employers and organisations involved in your project, this can lead to too many competing opinions, directives and capacity barriers, all of which can be distracting from your initial aim. Spending time to build relationships, establish clear and common aims (including reciprocal benefits) and being realistic about capacity and impact, is essential in the early phases. Once positive relationships are established on this foundation, written agreements which quantify and qualify the collaboration and the timeframe can be helpful to manage expectations.