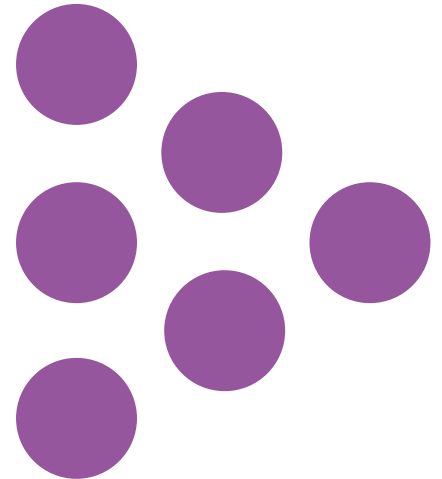

Project-based learning in university technical colleges. How are employers engaged?

**5th International Conference on Employer
Engagement in Education and Training
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Evaluation of UTCs

What are UTCs?

- schools for 14 to 19 year olds in England that deliver an education which combines technical and academic learning
- focus on technical areas that relate to Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) subjects

Aim of study

- to understand effective practice and current approaches to curriculum design and employer engagement

Evaluation of UTCs

Project objectives:

- ascertain use of project-based learning (PBL) and employer engagement in the development and delivery of curriculum
- share effective practice lessons learned with sector

Methodology:

- Phase 1: 10 UTC case studies/MI data analysis/student surveys (2017)
- Phase 2: 3 further in-depth UTC case studies/follow-up destinations interviews (2018)

UTC employers provide:

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- real life application of learning/qualifications
 - *current* assessment of skills' needs (incl. employability)
 - depth of industry experience 'day-to-day'
 - 'genuine'/authentic challenges/problems
 - ongoing, regular input
 - employer briefs, activities, resources, time, expertise etc
 - updates for teachers to relate lessons to world of work
 - resources e.g. engineering workshops etc

Levels of employer engagement and PBL

At most profound, engagement characterised by employers:

- taking 'ownership' of their 'part'
- inputting into formative assessment and feedback
- influencing curriculum modules/units
- informing specialist, current skills and knowledge.

Requires:

- ✓ Mutual understanding of how employers and educators operate
- ✓ Mutual respect for, and value of, what each bring to the table

Levels of PBL:

1. 'tied into the curriculum in that it fulfils BTEC units' (rare)
2. '*additional to the curriculum but supports it*' (more prevalent)
3. '*brings the qualification to life*' (common)

UTC Challenges

Include:

- securing and managing suitable range of employers providing high-quality input
- recruiting and retaining appropriate students with interest in the specialism and motivated to engage and succeed
- recruiting and retaining high-calibre staff with appropriate knowledge and skills
- lack of 'common' language between employers and educators

Employer engagement/PBL

What works well? In summary.....

- ✓ Destinations at the heart of activities
- ✓ Dedicated time for staff to work with employers
- ✓ Students taking ownership
- ✓ Employers taking ownership
- ✓ Authentic/real briefs - inspire students
- ✓ Directly relevant to BTEC/A Level – not add on
- ✓ Students aware they can gain e.g. future employment/an apprenticeship
- ✓ Employers giving/gaining what they want
- ✓ Ongoing, respectful relationship between UTC and employer

Advice offered for new UTCs

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- develop a clear vision and mission
 - raise the UTC's profile and reputation
 - recruit and retain high-quality staff
 - ensure pupils develop meaningful, relevant and appropriate skills
 - invest in building and maintaining quality relationships with employers
 - provide regular and sustained exposure to a range of industry partners

Information

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Phase 1 report:

McCrone, T., Martin, K., Sims, D. and Rush, C. (2017). *Evaluation of University Technical Colleges (UTCs)*. Slough: NFER.

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/2222/utcr01.pdf>

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