

6) EMPLOYER LINKS

(With thanks to the Life2 project – managed by Norton Radstock College - <http://www.life-2.eu/>)

Relevant for the following LLUK Domains:

- Domain A Professional values and practice
- Domain B Learning and teaching
- Domain C Specialist learning and teaching
- Domain F Access and progression

Short description:

This is an activity for teacher trainees to try with their own students and then evaluate within the context of an ITE or CPD programme.

It is designed to help bring learners and teachers closer to understanding employer needs and can be related to specific vocational areas and courses.

Situation:

This activity is very flexible. It could be included in a single session or expanded to cover several weeks of course work. It can also be adapted to different levels of learner and situations e.g. the unemployed as well as different vocational areas e.g. hairdressing, health and social care or business studies.

Teachers should use their network of contacts including family, friends and learners to make links with employers. They can work with just one employer or a group of employers as a panel.

Teachers should also try to link the activity closely to course work so that learners see the relevance and feel motivated. Comparing the activity to popular TV shows e.g. in the UK 'The Apprentice' and 'Dragon's Den' may inspire learners and help make the activity a fun experience.

Aims and objectives:

The learners will work in teams to develop an innovative solution to a problem or task set by the employer. The teams will present their ideas to the employer and receive feedback both motivational and formative. This should prove a valuable experience in terms of understanding employer needs in the vocational area whilst developing communication and interpersonal skills.

Detailed Description:

• **The preparation:**

The teacher should make contact with employer(s) using their network and involve learners wherever possible. Discuss areas where the employer needs help e.g. designing a logo (art and design), developing new product ideas to appeal to the target market (business studies),

developing a website (ICT), developing healthy menus which appeal (health and social care) and hair styles for the teenage market (hairdressing). The employer should be clear that no responsibility is taken for the viability of the ideas but that they should be seen as a source of fresh ideas. There should be benefits for all parties: learners, employers and teachers. Invite the employer to attend the briefing session (which could be held at the employer's premises).

- **The session**

Put the learners into small groups. Explain the objectives. The employer explains the task to the teams and they can ask questions for clarification.

Ask learners to discuss and agree how they will work as a team e.g. how they will bring out each other's strengths and creativity, meet timescales and ensure that they are working to the employer's brief at each stage.

Give the learners a timescale. Observe how they are working as a team and give feedback, encouragement and suggestions if required. Help with any resources which may be required.

When the agreed time is up, the teams should present their ideas to the employer or employer panel. Ensure that all team members are involved in the presentation.

The employer provides motivational and formative feedback on the ideas and presentations. The teacher and learners also provide feedback on the experience and the results.

Requirements and Resources:

Flipcharts, ICT equipment, specific resources for the vocational area/idea.

Assessment:

Learning can be assessed through observation of teamwork and communication, feedback on the presentations and employer feedback.

From the ITE perspective this activity can help trainees develop ways of embedding employability into their own programmes, embed functional skills / LLN ICT into their vocational teaching, and engage more effectively with employers.

Hints and tips:

- Students should work in small groups
- An element of competitiveness can help to make the activity fun but this needs to be managed carefully to build individual learner confidence
- The employer (it could be the employing college or organisation) should be as involved as possible in the activity but the teacher should be mindful of the time the employer has to spend with learners
- Numeracy skills could be introduced e.g. working out how much the idea would cost
- As an alternative, a general task could be set e.g. a healthy new product and employers and experts are invited to give their views

Commentary:

Similar activities have been run in UK schools and colleges as part of enterprise initiatives and within vocational courses. For example, at Norton Radstock College, health and social care students designed a healthy cereal including packaging and hairdressing students took part in a competition judged by local employers.