Effective use of data in Business

Ba king and Dagenham College

LEAD CONTACT

Caryn Swart

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Introduction to Teach Too

T T is an ETF-funded project delivered in partnership by UCL Institute of Education and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP). Deriving from a key recommendation of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) Report in 2013, it sets out to explore and evaluate different models of collaborative activity between employers and providers at practitioner level, in the co-design, delivery and assessment of vocational education and training programmes. Project findings show that these collaborative partnerships have produced significant short and medium-term benefits for employers, providers and learners, and enrich and strengthen local economies and communities.

Jay Derrick Director of Teacher Education (post-compulsory), UCL, Institute of Education

Project aims

- To build a library of briefs consisting of case studies and real life scenarios from partner employers, so that students can develop and apply knowledge
- To develop a range of high quality teaching resources to support the use of emerging technologies, the interpretation and analysis of data and to develop further maths skills
- To enhance curriculum delivery by evidencing to students that the skills and knowledge they are gaining is directly linked to the requirements of employers
- To develop cross-curricular and collaborative industry partnerships.

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Project description

Data, and the ability to use it, is the secret ingredient behind many forward thinking successful businesses. It is an emerging career path and a growing number of specialist industries recognise this as an essential skill set to workplace progression. There is a skills shortage in this area: 46% of businesses report staff shortages in data analytics; with a 26% increase in demands for 'big data' staff.

Working collaboratively with the Data Science institute and employers, this project has developed schemes of work, lesson plans and session specific resources that provide units of delivery to business studies students, that deepen knowledge and extend occupational practice in the field of data analysis. The units cover: predictive analytics, business decision making, and engineering in emerging technologies. The units of study provide students with the opportunity to apply and test their theoretical knowledge to real work scenarios. The study of predictive data analytics in particular provides a platform to enhance and further maths skills development and allows for application of knowledge to live briefs in order to solve business problems.

As curriculum design and delivery was jointly planned with employers, it provided an invaluable opportunity for the up-skilling of College staff in new techniques. It also provided benefits for employers in terms of networking with other industry specialists as part of "Industry speaks-College listens" events. These events provided employers with the opportunity to not only network with College staff, but also with each other and with industry leaders and specialists. For many SMEs this was the only opportunity they had had to network with larger employers. Through these events there has been an increase in employer engagement with the College.

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Positive impacts

- Building a bank of case studies and industry briefs has provided students with opportunities to stretch learning and apply practical solutions to industry specific problems. All 58 students involved in the project have developed analytical, evaluation and data interpretation skills
- Students have gained a better understanding of this skills shortage area of data analysis and the transferability of skills gained to other sectors. Students are now much more aware of potential employment opportunities
- A range of high quality resources and materials have been developed jointly: this has supported the up-skilling of staff and provided them with tangible, specific case studies based on real business scenarios
- The increased interaction between curriculum staff and employers has added tremendous value to the dual professionalism of the teaching staff, ensuring their delivery reflects current industry practice
- Employers have gained a better understanding of the teaching and learning cycle and have adapted some of their practices: this has been achieved through dual delivery of sessions
- A direct outcome of the “Industry speaks” events has been an increase in employer engagement; evidenced through employers signing Engagement Charters with the College.

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Key learning points

- It is important that students are able to use the same technology and specifications that employers would have access to or be using in data analysis situations
- Students' digital literacy skills must be identified and a plan of action implemented to address any areas of weakness at the start of the project, as this is key to data analysis and interpretation
- Employers need support in developing teaching materials and especially in the delivery of these materials
- Through the process of engagement with employers, it became clear that teaching methodologies used by college staff were not well understood by industry trainers.

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Recommendations for developing employer partnerships

- Clarity of purpose between all parties is essential for true partnership work
- Ensure that all parties share and explain their ways of working –