

Proof of Concept

Here is the submission document by Pembrokeshire College to the TES Award body of the original course ran under my company, Module8. circa 2000

APPLICATION FOR BEACON AWARD (TES AWARD FOR WIDENING PARTICIPATION)

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The Project: Planning And Purpose

Pembrokeshire College has responded to the Lifelong Learning agenda by close liaison with the local community and agencies. This has resulted in a range of activities aimed at widening participation. One approach was to target the 16-25 cohort that was not involved in learning or employment and to create a curriculum that would attract and motivate the group.

Pembrokeshire has a dispersed and rural population with a handful of isolated urban centres. The economy is depressed with high unemployment and low GDP. The county has European Objective 1 status. In common with the rest of the country there is tendency for a group of 16-25 year olds to become excluded- through social background, poor qualifications, geographical isolation or poor motivation and confidence. For this group of young people, as with similar adults, there is an obvious reluctance to enrol on a college course.

This project arose with contacts made with the Youth Service and with a community organisation of artists and musicians, known as Module8. At a series of initial meetings it was quickly realised that a working partnership could provide a formula that would offer involvement, musical skills, technological skills and key skills to excluded young people.

The Project

Target Group: excluded 16-25's

Venue: four outreach centres in outlying towns (Cardigan, Fishguard, Narberth, Haverfordwest). These centres were either Youth clubs or community centres unused during the daytime. The outreach approach was seen as a way of taking the programme closer to each community and avoiding the perception of officialdom and institutionalisation relating to the college delivery. Also, the local youth workers would be able to network and promote the project in each area. Each centre would take up to 12 students, making an overall total of 48.

The Programme:

This was firmly based on the attraction to many young people of the club and dance culture, the availability of Outreach venues, and the daytime and midweek participation of Module8 artists, the funding, management, guidance and promotion through the college. There are key points to note.

a) Although also promoted in mainstream college publications, the project also designed its own branded flyers which were similar in style to club promotions. It was not branded as an overtly college course, but simply as Entertainment Technology and the opportunity for hands-on participation.

b) The project did not employ existing college staff. All tutors or artists were local people already working professionally in the field e.g. Nightclubs in New York, Ibiza, the Ministry Of Sound and others in the UK as well as festivals such as Glastonbury. The college on a part

time basis employed these experts, and often they brought along their own equipment. This had two major advantages. Firstly, the students were working with genuine practitioners. Secondly, the students naturally imbued the artists with credibility. Also employed from this artist group was a co-ordinator who attended each session in each venue and supported the tutors with technical backup, liaised with the college, kept registers, planned and recorded assessment and attainment records.

c) The project could not initially identify a qualification with the right content and flexibility. As a result, the Module8 artists and a college lecturer together wrote a series of units for Open College Network accreditation. These received approval from SWWOCN in June 1999.

The units were:

Laser Lighting, Video Jockey Skills, DJ skills, Midi Sampling, Backdrops and Stage Props, Mask Making and Body Art, Dance, Geodesic Dome Construction.

The structure of the program was as follows:

The course would run for one day a week in each centre for thirty weeks
Each unit would last for 5 weeks, worth two OCN credits
Students could complete the whole 30 weeks and 6 units or just take a single unit
In each 5 week unit, each centre would be running different unit- so at least four units would be running in each week

The method of assessment was a central element of the programme. During the 5 sessions of a unit, theory would be introduced and practical skills developed. At the weekend of the fifth week there would be a live gig at a venue in the county. Each group of students would make its contribution to the evening by bringing what they had learned that unit. These events would be open to the public, with crowds of 300 to 700 attending.

The college programme co-ordinator and Module8 co-ordinator would complete the assessment process at the event. This was a tremendously important component of the programme's success- the gig worked because each group brought to it their learned skills, they were being assessed while performing in a live workspace, and they were creating a professionally run entertainment experience for hundreds of young people.

64 students participated, 31 completing the whole 30 week programme.

Outcomes

Some of the students have found employment in this field by using their acquired skills.

It was decided to not formally include Key Skills assessment in the year's programme. This was because the target group was identified as disaffected, excluded and disinterested in wider learning. However, all staff involved realised the enormous potential for key skill acquisition within the programme. Although not recorded in assessments, a part of the philosophy of the course was the belief that through the coursework activity students would be developing:

Communication: interaction with staff and students, working with others on activities, promotional techniques

Numeracy: some aspects of the Dome construction, costing and promoting a gig

IT: Promotion and costing

Working With Others: embedded in nearly all aspects

Improving Own Learning and Performance: by doing something that really motivates them and through reflection and target setting during the tutorial process

Problem Solving: in many aspects- setting up equipment, working with people and equipment to create a desired effect, planning and running the gig.

It has been a major outcome of the programme that many previously negative and demotivated people have acquired confidence, direction and the skills to move forward.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim was to widen participation. The college's enrolment data and liaison with other agencies highlighted a variety of social groups who were excluded from the learning process. This included those in public housing areas, the elderly, the rural and geographically distant, the unemployed, females with young children, many poorly qualified males and a significant group of young people who had left school but not made the transition to training, further education or employment. The college decided to devise strategies to deal with each of these groups based on their needs, the barriers they faced and their interests. This project concentrated on excluded young people in rural towns and villages.

Partnerships with other agencies were an important first step. Meetings were held with the Careers Service, the Youth Service, the Princes Trust and independent youthwork projects. This process gave clear insights into the target group- the majority were poorly qualified. There was also a significant minority with above average qualifications. Many lived in dispersed small urban centres or the rural hinterland. Many possessed poor common and social skills. Some had created a sub-culture of self-exclusion. The partnership then reviewed a range of approaches that might be used to interest and benefit the group. The list included sport, technology, film and media, small business, music. It was music, and particularly club dance that was felt to have the widest appeal. This belief was then checked out with young people through discussions with youth workers.

The objectives then followed: to create a meaningful learning programme around this kind of music, to build in skills for employability (technical and interpersonal), to enable progression to further learning or training, to create enthusiasm and bring out creativity, to offer the programme in centres across the county, to create a comfortable "non college" environment and style of delivery, to manage the learning process so that it possessed rigour, structure and all aspects were of high quality. This last point was an important management issue. While recognising that the customer group required a different approach and that the youth workers and employed artists/tutors had a different cultural viewpoint to delivery, the college insisted on a reasonable degree of conformity to its quality system.

These objectives were attained through the summer of 1999. Units were written and approved. Venues were located. Publicity was created and distributed. A member of Module8 was employed to co-ordinate the program, and support the tutors. ***This co-ordinator received training in the college systems, wrote the units, liased with the college, managed the arrangements for both the artists and technical equipment to be in the right location at the right time, and arranged the publicity, tickets, location and operation of the live gig, the assessment process on the night.*** The artists also received training in Health and Safety and in college/OCN delivery and assessment methods.

Promotion and recruitment followed quickly from the development of the programme. A distinctive flyer and information sheet was widely distributed to suitable community outlets. Liaison with the Youth Service, the Careers Company, Employment Service and the voluntary sector resulted in support for the project and lead to referrals for application. All applicants were interviewed by the co-ordinator in the centre nearest to their home.

Monitoring Procedures

The programme was subject to the college's routine quality process- guidance at Admissions, staff induction and training, student induction and individual learning agreement. Peer assessment of teaching took place. When the Faculty of Technology received a full interval review, the Entertainment Technology programme was included. At the end of the course all students completed a questionnaire.

In terms of quality, there were many obvious advantages to be gained from employing professional artists as tutors. However, in order to avoid possible problems in using inexperienced tutors, the co-ordinator received training in delivery and assessment and in course administration and record keeping. The co-ordinator also acted as personal tutor. In this way the students were able to receive the benefits of cutting edge delivery underpinned by effective administration and personal support.

As a result of the internal review conducted by the college Quality team, the programme was praised for originality, staff-student interaction and relationships and good learning and teaching.

Outcomes and Benefits

The participants, mostly aged 16-25, were unemployed or in the New Deal system. Few had a recent record of academic or career achievement. Some were single parents; others had experienced drug-related problems. It is our view that the content of the programme, the unusual staffing and philosophy of the delivery combined with discreet but rigorous attention to course administration and personal support resulted in enrolment in excess of target and a high rate of retention for this type of cohort.

Students have developed artistic and technical skills. They have gained upto 12 OCN credits. They have gained confidence and developed the whole key skill range. Some have gone onto employment in this form of entertainment. Others have developed the confidence to resume other education.

Student Profiles

■■■■■■■■■■- set up his own promotions company called ■■■■■■■■■■ running club nights and light shows. His bookings are increasing rapidly.

■■■■■■■■■■- began very insecure and with low self-esteem. Mother of an 18 month child. Now highly enthusiastic and showing leadership skills. The most reliable and dedicated student. ***" I liked the alternative teaching methods... the wide variety of materials... the 5 week module system...the intensive one day...I have become more confident and assertive, regained my ambition and am in control of my future."***

■■■■■■■■■■- going to a Music Technology degree at Staffordshire University.

■■■■■■■■■■- could hardly speak to tutors or students to begin with. Is now open and confident and runs the video Jockey show at gigs.

■■■■■■■■■■- a single mum who had dropped out of an HND in Art and Design. ***" Before the course I was a single mum not doing anything...going downhill fast...I'd heard about the course and liked the art content and that it was part time and nearby. Right time, right place! I'm now alot more confident at communicating with and organising people. I want to go and study stage design."***

Three students reached the final of the Welsh DJ competition in Swansea, one of whom is going on a 6 month training at a recording studio in Cardiff.