



THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

STUDIO SCHOOLS Initiative summary Autumn 2007

About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation is a unique organisation with a 50 year track record of successful social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Our work today combines practical projects in over 20 areas around the UK; teams and investment funds working to create new enterprises in health, education and other fields, as well as research and publishing on pressing social issues. We also host an international network of over 100 organisations involved in practical social innovation through Social Innovation Exchange.

Our primary goal is to speed up society's ability to respond to changing needs through innovating and replicating new methods and models. Our work is motivated by the desire to not only research, but act –by the principle that your first duty is to solve problems, not simply write about them or try to persuade someone else to act. We work to achieve this through our three programme strands: Launchpad, Local projects and Research- which all complement each other in the shared goal of finding practical initiatives to meet unmet needs.

Launchpad at the Young Foundation is a trailblazing programme in the UK. Launchpad finds kernels of potential new initiatives in research and other sources, and systematically nurtures an idea through its development and into being as a new organisation.

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innovation



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Introduction

Designed for 14-19 year olds, Studio Schools will integrate work and learning in a fundamental way. Studio Schools will be simultaneously schools – providing qualifications and a full range of skills – and incorporate businesses or social enterprises providing services directly to customers. A combination of innovative elements underpins Studio Schools: real work for real wages as part of the school week; national curriculum taught through interdisciplinary, business-themed projects; and personalization through communities of 300 students guided by personal coaches.

There is a set of twin challenges facing the UK that we can no longer afford to ignore: the challenge of youth disengagement from schooling and the challenge of missing skills in the country's economy. Having examined these challenges in some depth, the Young Foundation believes the time and context is ripe to offer an innovation in education to strike at the core of these interconnected dilemmas. In the concept of 'Studio Schools', there is a model for a different kind of learning that will capture the hearts and minds of young people while preparing them to excel in the 21st century economy. With this four page paper, we aim to set out the need for this initiative, describe the model, and share the progress we have made thus far towards realising this vision.

Background

Despite talk in the UK for decades about the arrival of a globalised service economy, a large proportion of the population is still unprepared to benefit. This is not about job opportunities – it is true even at times when our economy is most robust and dynamic. The problem seems to be that employers are looking for – and not finding – a particular set of skills. They are seeking motivation and flexibility, willingness to work and learn as well as resourceful behaviour, mannerisms and confidence. In an increasingly service-orientated economy, these skills are pre-requisite.

Academic evidence backs up the employers' perspective. Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman researches non-cognitive skills, which include interpersonal skills, self-discipline and punctuality, initiative and self-confidence. His work demonstrates that non-cognitive skills are at least as important as technical skills in determining employability, earnings and career success. In order to foster these skills young people need real, practical experience in their formative years. Yet, in this respect there remains a stubborn mismatch between what is provided by the education system and what is needed.

Not only do schools struggle to provide this kind of preparation, they are increasingly under pressure to keep young people engaged in any learning in their teen aged years. We know that wide-spread disengagement from schools has resulted in an unacceptable number of students either dropping out or failing to attend regularly. And though multiple policy initiatives have been instituted specifically to address these concerns, the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is roughly the same as a decade ago and truancy rates have seen scant improvement.

For every young person out of school, there are several students who remain in school but fail to thrive. The key factors are lack of attractiveness and perceived irrelevance of the school curriculum. There is considerable evidence that practical, hands-on education can provide motivation for the disengaged, particularly when courses are matched to their interests and aspirations.

The Studio Schools Concept

What will it take to change the grave situation we find ourselves in? We believe that 'Studio Schools' provide one solution. Studio Schools will be small schools for 14-19 year olds that foster enterprise skills and entrepreneurship using a unique methodology that makes learning practical. They will build on, but go beyond, existing models of work experience and apprenticeship. Studio Schools will be simultaneously schools – providing qualifications and a full range of skills – and businesses providing services directly to customers. Each Studio School will enable a broad range of students to thrive because it will spark their imagination and drive, engage their passion and minds, and work with them in a highly personalised way to achieve their own desired outcomes.

There are several key elements of the model for Studio Schools:

Making learning practical

- Each Studio School will have a core business or businesses that it hosts connected to an occupational sector, for example media, hospitality or leisure. Each student will work in the business between 4 and 12 hours per week and will make up the majority of its workforce. The day and year will be longer, with students booking their holiday just like employees would. Businesses will aim to generate profit; older students will be expected to make a net positive contribution and will be compensated.
- The taught curriculum will be dominated by Enterprise Projects – consultancy-style projects based on business themes. Working in teams, students will study GCSE, A-level and NVQ subjects through in-depth and multidisciplinary exploration of a posed problem (e.g. a marketing and sales project has students tackle “How can the local charity shop boost revenue?”) As part of the Enterprise Project framework, students will also have the opportunity to develop business plans for their own enterprises. Together these links in to the real world can address the disconnect young people find between education and life.

Inculcating enterprising skills and behaviours

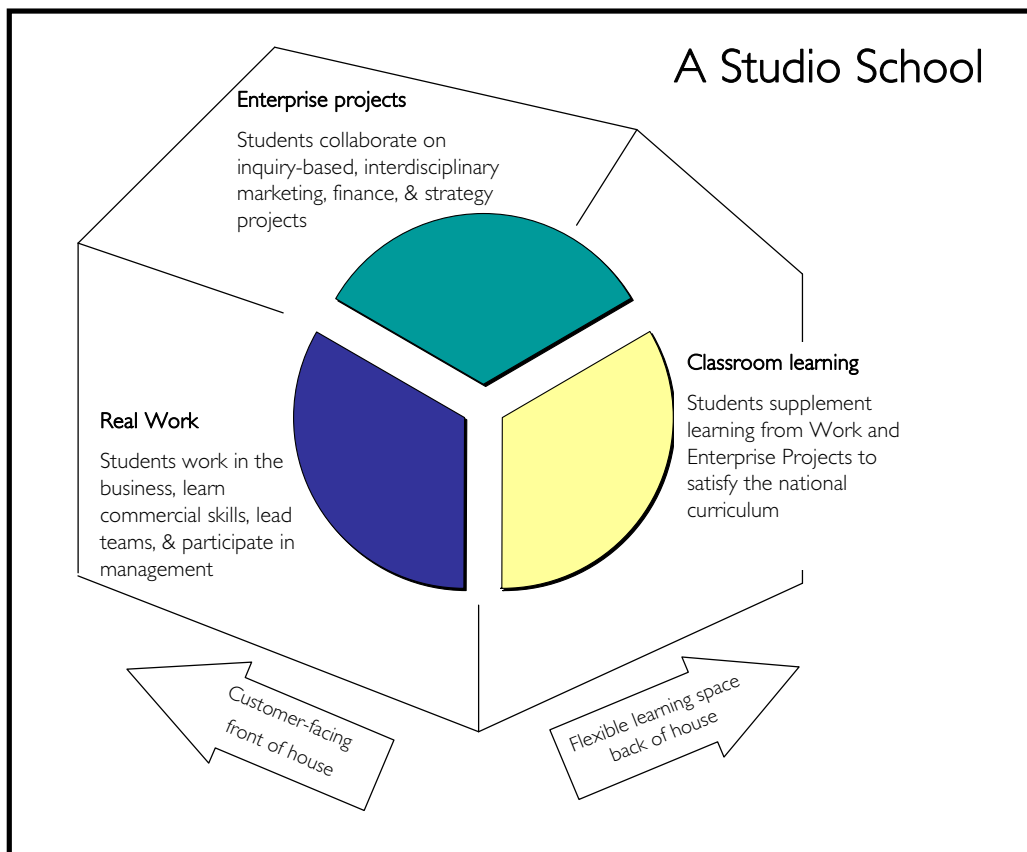
- Having an operating business at its core will make a Studio School feel quite different from a typical school. A buzzing environment and professional ethos will arise from emphases on: serving others and the demands of a service economy; working as part of a team and relying on peers; and self-starting and responsible choices toward future success. Housing the Studio School in commercial premises or a location that is fit for both the business and education purposes reinforces this ethos. Most Studio Schools will have a storefront or customer-facing location where students work, as well as separate learning space.
- The explicit focus on developing enterprise skills will pervade the Studio School. It will be woven into the taught lessons, frame the management's interaction with its (student) employees, and be evaluated through new and existing measures that will form part of the assessment of the Enterprise Projects. It is this ethos that will be common across all Studio Schools and form the basis for employers to know that hiring a Studio School graduate means bringing quality to their workforce.

Personalising education in a small school

- Each Studio School will be a small school (envisaged as <300 students) which is essential to engage with business and truly integrate work into learning. This size is critical to knowing each student well and tailoring their path through a Studio School to meet their interests and needs. Fostering strong student-staff bonds and a sense of community is

equally important as integrating learning into work to attract and retain the many students for whom comprehensive secondary education feels unstimulating.

- A personal coach will guide each student through their learning, goal-setting and choices. They will work together to map the learning through the three means of teaching: work in the business, Enterprise Projects and classroom learning. Students will choose their own end goals, and be supported towards achieving aspirational outcomes. Because Studio Schools will teach the national curriculum or towards specialised diplomas where possible, all opportunities will be open to students leaving Studio Schools: they may enter into higher or further education, take up an apprenticeship or be in an advantageous position to enter the job market directly with a rich set of skills and robust CV.



The combined effect of these elements will be to **engage a diverse population of learners** from the at-risk to the high flyers, thereby demonstrating that practical learning is suited to all levels of achievement.

Studio Schools stand as a concept as an innovation in education – our scan of global educational landscape has established that there is no one model that offers what a Studio School will. However, most of its key elements draw on best practice in education internationally. Many relevant, distinct and highly successful models have provided inspiration and instruction on particular elements of a Studio School. We have seen some of these first hand through several study visits, in particular to New York City and Copenhagen. By combining some elements which have already proven successful, we expect to mitigate the risks associated with implementing a new kind of education.

Progress to date

Having started with nothing more than a concept backed by evidence and research, Studio Schools has developed rapidly. In July 2006, the Young Foundation delivered the first concept paper to the Department for Education and Skills, which delineated all the elements of the model and tested key assumptions. Over 30 local authorities, colleges and academies have expressed an interest in the Studio Schools concept and since January 2007, the Young Foundation has been working with eight of these to develop the concept in more detail and plan the first wave of Studio Schools. The Studio School partnership includes Barnfield College and Academies, Barnsley, Blackpool, Kirklees, Newham Council and College, Oldham, Sheffield, and South Tyneside. We are continuing discussions with some additional councils and academy sponsors. In addition to our local partners, we are also supported by DCSF, the Innovation Unit, Edge, QCA, local LSCs and other stakeholders.

The partners in the eight local areas have dedicated significant resource towards their commitment of exploring the feasibility of a Studio School in their area. Each has engaged in economic and educational research, mapping the potential for the opening of a Studio School that will meet the local need. In addition to working independently, this group of local authorities works collaboratively to develop the model, including key elements of curriculum, leadership and staffing, and qualifications. This commitment to partnership working is unique in the UK – we know of no other instances where local authorities have joined forces to create a new kind of education that will benefit young people from the north of the country to the south.

The first Studio School opens in September 2007 as a programme within Barnfield West Academy and Barnfield College in Luton. Initially run as a field trial with 30 students, we intend to ramp up to a fully fledged Studio School after testing some of the essential elements in the first year. Other Studio Schools are planned to open from September 2008 onwards.

Success in our minds is broader than the opening of a Studio School. We will launch a Studio Schools foundation in April 2008; it will have the dual aims of supporting the development and operation of Studio Schools but also focus on carrying forward key elements of practical, enterprising education into the mainstream. The primary intention is to create tangible offerings, such as the Enterprise Projects curriculum, to help educators in other settings take learning reform to the next level. At the same time, the foundation can help partnering local authorities prepare the ground for change – such a different way of thinking about education will require strong support from a wide range of stakeholders, including students, parents, unions, business community as well as politicians and local officials. A secondary goal is to push for a climate where Studio Schools and Studio School-like ideas can take root.

Support

We are pleased to have already begun developing a network of forward thinkers. The work of the Young Foundation and the Studio Schools partnership has garnered the support of a wide range of stakeholders, from education ministers to youth groups. Key ministers, politicians and policy makers continue to follow the developments closely and lend their support to realise a Studio School. To date, the development of the concept has been underwritten by Edge, the Innovation Unit and Young Foundation core funding.

For more information, please contact Simon Tucker or at the Young Foundation.