

# Learning and education: what we do and why we do it

The Young Foundation has a unique record of understanding educational needs and developing innovative, and effective, ways of meeting them. Past examples include the development of the Open University, extended schools, summer universities and the open colleges. Today our work ranges from new Studio Schools for 14-19 year olds to new models of apprenticeship and online learning platforms, and new curriculum models to teach resilience.

## Our focus

For over fifty years the Young Foundation has been involved in finding better ways to make the most of peoples' potential. We're interested not just in academic and vocational skills, but also in the broader set of capabilities that people need: how they can be resilient, creative, self-disciplined and self-motivated.

We work through **research**, some of which was summarized in the report *Grit: the skills for success and how they are grown*, which brings together a huge body of global evidence on what works in education.

We work through **policy influence**, for example providing advice to local and national governments, including both Australia and the UK.

We help to design and run **practical projects**, such as teaching resilience to several thousand 11 and 12 year olds.

And we create and support new organizations that can scale up better models. These are supported by the Young Foundation's education ventures fund, the **Learning Launchpad**, which has enabled 14 initiatives to grow through a combination of financial investment and tailored expert support – coaching entrepreneurs, researching the issues and opening new doors.

In 2009 the Learning Launchpad reached over 3000 young people and engaged 899 businesses and 61 schools

## Schools for the future

Today's school children will find themselves in workplaces that demand initiative, resourcefulness, determination and the ability to adapt to constant change. **Studio Schools** were developed to meet this need. They responded to employers saying that what they most wanted from school leavers but weren't getting were these broader social and employability skills; to teenagers wanting a more engaging kind of education; and to parents concerned that their children weren't being adequately prepared for life and work.

"I'm incredibly excited by the studio schools movement... These schools will offer both academic and vocational qualifications, and are explicitly designed to break through the traditional divide by providing an aspirational but practical pathway that will offer a broad range of qualifications and a clear route either to employment or university." (Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, Secretary of Education)

Studio Schools are small schools, with typically 300 pupils. They offer a more 'hands on' approach to learning, structured around practical projects. They provide young people with both teachers and personal coaches. And they provide not only formal academic qualifications but also much stronger employability and life skills that they increasingly need.

The model was developed drawing on experiences and evidence from around the world about how to make practical learning successful. The first two schools have opened in the autumn of 2010, drawing on very successful field trials, and over twenty new schools are in development across the country.

## New kinds of learning

Evidence shows that common practices, including 'teaching to the test' and a highly prescriptive curriculum that focuses on didactic methods and academic ability measured by exam results and IQ, can have a damaging effect.<sup>1</sup> Asked what they do most often in school in a MORI poll in 2009<sup>2</sup>, over 60 per cent of 11 to 16-year-olds said they copied from a board or a book, and 'listen to a teacher talking for a long time'. Only 19 per cent saw 'a sense of achievement' as a benefit of learning (compared with 35 per cent in 1998). The results confirmed widespread concerns about growing disengagement of young people in mainstream schools. A number of Young Foundation ventures are pioneering new methods of re-engaging young people and equipping them with vital skills:

**Resilience** is a new social enterprise delivering training to enhance children and young people's capacity to cope, adapt and thrive in difficult times. The courses are based on a principle of psychological immunisation: by teaching people to deal effectively with situations of managed risk, they learn how to regulate their emotions

Our resilience pilots reached over 4,000 pupils in 24 schools. Two evaluations showed that the programme had a significant impact in reducing depression, and in enhancing confidence, persistence and the ability to engage positively with challenges and new opportunities among the

and behaviour when exposed to greater adversity. Training programmes are being rolled out for teachers and other children and youth services professionals across the UK.

The **School of Everything** connects people who want to learn with people who can teach anything from maths to martial arts. 25,000 teachers are signed up, with almost a quarter under the age of 25. Based on a website, the school of everything is also now helping people to organize learning circles.

**Enternships** provides internships in entrepreneurial contexts, from start-ups to global firms. Its founder Rajeeb Day was O2 young entrepreneur of the year in 2009.

**Space Unlimited** is a consultancy where the experts are teenagers. A team of expert facilitators put young people in the lead, enabling them to apply their creativity to real issues facing organisations such as KPMG, Oracle and NESTA. Young people get the opportunity to learn about the real world outside the school gates while Space Unlimited's clients access a new way of generating fresh insights that can improve businesses' performance, open new markets and enhance employee development.

**Enabling Enterprise** offers resources to help teaching professionals teach students new skills, such as project management or book keeping, while in regular lessons, like French, Maths or ICT. In the 2009/10 academic year, Enabling Enterprise ran 26 programmes reaching 600 students across secondary schools in London and Manchester. Next year, they plan to run 50 programmes to give over 1000 young people a real experience managing an enterprise.

The Young Foundation developed **UpRising** to work with 19-25 year olds to equip them with the skills, experience and confidence to become public leaders. Over the course of a year participants receive training from senior journalists, politicians, business leaders, social entrepreneurs and representatives from community groups. UpRisers run their own social action projects – from influencing authorities to improve infrastructure in their local areas to campaigns to change national legislation. UpRising started work across east London and recently launched in Birmingham.

The **Youth of Today** is a two-year partnership of seven leading youth organisations developing leadership opportunities for 13-19 year olds – from shadowing senior politicians to training as young journalists. Young people lead the programme, making decisions about grants and shaping the research. The Youth of Today £1 million fund has reached over 1,500 young people, through investment in 37 youth sector organisations. In addition, 36 grants were made directly to young leaders through the I Do Ideas web portal developed by the Young Foundation. A series of research reports are showing what works in youth leadership, covering topics ranging from the use of social network technologies to employment creation.

**Maslaha** is developing an alternative curriculum to engage Muslim pupils by drawing out the links with their cultural heritage. Working closely with teachers and subject specialists, they have launched a series of teaching resources which highlight the important contribution of Islam and Muslim scholars to various disciplines (from

mathematics and science to literature and art). The resources have the added benefit of raising the self-esteem of Muslim pupils while also highlighting Islam's often overlooked contribution to modern society.

## Assisting transitions into work

Our research has shown that many young people are failing to make successful transitions into adulthood and jobs.<sup>3</sup> In a context of higher youth unemployment, including among graduates, these transitions become even more critical.

We have sought out **new models of apprenticeships** aimed at challenging the perception that apprenticeships are 'blue-collar' roles of lower status than college-based learning. Through the Apprenticeship Pathfinder – a series of pilots in Hertfordshire, Manchester and South Tyneside – we have tested steps that can be taken by local authorities and others to expand and promote apprenticeships among young people.

**Working Rite**, also supported by the Learning Launchpad, has pioneered a unique model for helping young people across Scotland and in England make the transition from school into working life. Similar to old-fashioned apprenticeships, Working Rite matches hundreds of young people with an older self-employed tradesman for 6 month placements. This not only builds employability skills in young people, but also facilitates close relationships between them and employers. Through learning by doing, Working Rite participants get hands-on training outside the classroom and a chance to prove themselves as responsible adults. Working Rite won a Centre for Social Justice Award for its innovativeness, and its model was the blue-print for 100,000 apprenticeships announced by the coalition government earlier in 2010.

“The help from Learning Launchpad has given us the confidence, support and practical knowledge to scale up.” (Sandy Campbell, Working Rite)

The Higher Education system needs to respond to technological, international, economic and demographic trends. Our research on innovation in Higher Education has looked at a range of international models. In particular, we seek ways in which universities can tackle the issue of graduate unemployment more proactively, while also cutting costs. The two week **Fastlaners** programme helps university-leavers enter the job market. Unemployed young graduates from the East End of London sharpen practical career skills (such as CV and presentation writing) and soft skills (such as communication and networking). It also provides access to our networks of employers from the public, private and third sector. The early pilots have shown impressive results in helping young people into jobs.

Other projects underway range from new support to help ex-offenders into work (the deployer), systematic strategies to reduce the numbers of young people not in education or jobs (with several local authorities) and the Citizens University, providing skills in short courses, and due to launch in spring 2011.

Read further about the **Young Foundation's education practice** or contact [Cynthia.Shanmugalingam@youngfoundation.org](mailto:Cynthia.Shanmugalingam@youngfoundation.org)

## Overview of our work on education and young people

- **Arrival Education:** leadership development to help young people improve the soft skills they need in today's work place.
- **Citizens' University:** a modular training programme which provides adults the skills to become active citizens, ranging from first aid to community organising.
- **Externships:** internships for entrepreneurial young people.
- **Enabling Enterprise:** teaching resources which incorporate practical skills into traditional lessons.
- **Fastlaners:** an intensive 2-week programme to get unemployed graduates into work.
- **Resilience:** giving people the skills to manage everyday stress and seek opportunities.
- **School of Everything:** an online portal which connects people who want to learn a new skill (from flamenco to book keeping) with people who can teach them.
- **Space Unlimited:** a consultancy offering the insights of teenagers to businesses.
- **Studio Schools:** a new model of school teaching young people of all abilities through practical experience.
- **UpRising:** a programme which seeks out the most talented 19 to 25 year olds and trains them to be future leaders.
- **WorkingRite:** a new model of apprenticeship that provides young people with the first supported steps into work.
- **Youth of Today:** a grant-making and research programme which aims to get young people become leaders of change.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Review of Primary Education and the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, both published in 2009

<sup>2</sup> IPSOS MORI Campaign for Learning poll, *Grit the skills for success and how they are grown*, Young Foundation, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Sinking and Swimming: understanding Britain's Unmet Needs, Young Foundation, 2009 provided a comprehensive overview of changing patterns of need.