



National Evaluation of xlerate with xl January 2005 – January 2006.

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Xlerate with xl is a joint venture principally between the Princes Trust Scotland (PTS) and Young Enterprise Scotland (YES) and was developed at the request of the Scottish Executive and The Hunter Foundation (THF). It is aimed at young people in secondary schools who are not achieving their full potential. This may be due to disaffection with their school, or other reasons, such as a lack of confidence or self-esteem. An important aim of the programme is to increase their enterprising behaviours, and knowledge of enterprise, which will help them to succeed in education and give them a positive start in adult life. Xlerate with xl is supported by THF as part of their overall support for the Scottish Executive's Determined to Succeed (DtS) enterprise in education strategy.

The findings reported here are from the evaluation of the overall xlerate with xl programme with particular reference to the new xlerate (enterprise) module. The research was undertaken by Durham University Curriculum Evaluation and Management (CEM) Centre between January 2005 and January 2006.

Main findings

- Overall xlerate with xl was found to be a very effective programme, and one which is having a significant impact on the young people. Moreover it is held in high esteem by the young people themselves.
- There was much evidence to show a positive increase in the personal qualities of the young people, such as confidence and self-awareness.
- The programme helped some of the students to appreciate other people more and to work as part of a team.
- Many of the activities helped the students improve their communication and organisational skills.
- The programme helped students identify their own learning needs and to value education.
- In some cases the programme helped students to improve their relationship with their schools more generally.
- The programme very much supports the broad principles of DtS and much can be learnt from it about effective approaches to enterprise in education.
- The students were generally positive about how the programme could help in terms of their future employment, although as they progressed through the programme their concerns about future local work prospects tended to increase.
- In terms of external accreditation students could either do an SQA or ASDAN award, however this twin track route was not felt to be the most effective approach.
- Xlerate with xl has an important part to play in addressing the problem of young people at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Background

Xlerate with xl is based on the Princes Trust *xl* programme and the Young Enterprise *Franchise* programme. It was established in 2004 and has six key components (modules):

1. Personal, Interpersonal and Team Skills
2. Citizenship and Community Awareness
3. Community Based Project
4. Residential Activity (where possible)
5. Preparation for the World of Work
6. Xlerate (enterprise project)

Students apply to join the programme towards the end of S2. If selected they spend about three hours a week during S3 and S4 working in groups of about 12 students. The groups are led by two advisers, typically one of whom is a teacher in the host school and the other a youth or community worker. The clubs generally have their own room, and a senior member of staff who is a link with the school management. PTS appoint co-ordinators who oversee up to about 30 clubs. The students' work can be accredited with either SQA Higher Still or ASDAN awards.

The study

Durham University CEM Centre was commissioned by the Scottish Executive and THF to evaluate the impact of the programme, in particular the new xlerate component. Methods used included:

- 10 clubs visited during April and May 2005 to meet and discuss the programme with students and advisers.
- Focus groups with the co-ordinators and two groups of advisers.
- Additional telephone interviews including with headteachers from seven host schools.
- Meetings and ongoing contact with key people in PTS and YES.
- Two on-line surveys, firstly in February 2005 and repeated in November/December 2005. These looked at the students' views of the programme and assessed their enterprising attitudes and behaviours compared to those of other mainstream students.

Key findings

Overall we found xlerate with xl to be a very effective programme, and one that is having a significant positive impact on the individual students. Moreover the programme, and in particular the advisers, are held in high esteem by the students themselves.

Within the short timescale of the evaluation it was found that it does help develop enterprise knowledge and skills. With respect to enterprising behaviours and attitudes we found little difference between xlerate with xl students and their mainstream counterparts, although xlerate with xl students did score significantly higher in terms of curiosity.

The programme very much supports the underlying principals of the DtS strategy, and has an important part to play in helping meet the needs of many students, in particular those at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Advisers – without doubt it is the advisers who are very much the key to the programme. We were very much impressed with their enthusiasm and commitment – and while this is, of course, not unusual in the early stages of a new programme, serious consideration needs to be given as to how this can be maintained; in particular how they are appointed, managed and supported as the programme expands and develops.

Staffing appointments – the current model of a teacher and a youth or community worker should be maintained and, where appropriate, other staff, including support staff, should have the opportunity to be involved. In terms of appointments, it is fairly straightforward for teachers to be assigned and timetabled by their school. However, for the youth or community workers, issues such as employment status and tenure, as well as line management, should be further clarified and formalised.

Planning and preparation time – while the PTS do provide guidelines, this did vary to some degree and further clarification / agreement should be reached. Furthermore, this should be done with the various additional 'unspecified' roles in mind (e.g. informal support outside of club time) – the benefits of which can be highly significant, even if relatively intangible.

Training (advisers) – currently, the initial two training courses are relevant and well received. However, further more specific training should be offered, in particular to address the needs of working with the specific types of students on the programme. And wherever possible, all advisers should attend events in the host school, as well as attending both youth and community-based training events.

Coordinators – can have up to 30 clubs / schools to look after and this ratio should not be exceeded. Whilst the relative locations are a factor, they can still be ‘stretched’ in providing the necessary support. The needs of new advisers, in particular, can be quite significant, and new initiatives such as the Quality Assurance system will have an impact on their time. Their training needs, in particular in terms of their management roles, should be further considered.

Operational protocols – both clubs and schools would benefit from more formal expectations or agreements in terms of issues such as resources, including staffing and accommodation.

Other bodies and stakeholders – much of the potential strength of xlerate with xl lies in the quality of the relationship with the many other stakeholder organisations, including schools, local authorities, health sector, community organisations, and so on. A wide ranging multidisciplinary approach is often necessary to address the complex needs of the students, and therefore contacts should be further developed and maintained.

Programme advisory group – within the clubs, schools and many other organisations there is a vast amount of knowledge and expertise that could be more formally called upon to advise on the development of the programme. To this end, we would recommend the establishment of a national advisory group to work with the PTS and YES. This group could include existing advisers, headteachers from the host schools, local authority representatives, and other interested parties.

Assessment and accreditations – while appreciating that there will be quite substantial changes to the systems nationally, we would suggest that a simpler single-track approach be adopted, rather than the current twin (SQA or ASDAN) route. We note that at the time of writing that there are ongoing contacts between the SQA and ASDAN, and would hope that a joint, or ASDAN accredited by the SQA, award could be offered.

Xlerate module – in terms of the businesses that are created, we would suggest that these should either be product-based or a continuous service (rather than one-off events). We would also suggest that further consideration is given to the products offered through YES – organisations such as Traidcraft might be possible partners.

Residential – for a variety of reasons, not all students do the residential component. We would recommend that the PTS and other relevant bodies strongly encourage clubs to offer this, and that resources (including personnel) are made available to enable all students to take part.

Before and After – consideration could be given for a similar S5 / S6 programme, although operated separately. Likewise an S1 / S2 programme which linked in with primary feeder schools might be of benefit; in particular in terms of the primary / secondary transition.

NEET strategy – the programme could be more explicitly targeted at potential NEET students, and contribute to the strategy more generally. While both the contents and the methods of working have much to offer potential NEET students, we do still feel there is much to be learned (both ways) from other programmes.

Quality assurance – we agree with the general principles which have been adopted, but would still suggest that the system should be more in line with the HMLe How Good Is Our School (HGIOS), including the Enterprise in Education Quality Indicators. This would also allow the xlerate with xl system to more easily feed in to the host schools’ quality systems.

Performance monitoring – although some data is collected on a UK-wide basis little use is made of it at the moment. Further consideration should be given as to how the PTS and other stakeholders can use it, and where possible how it could tie in with existing systems to avoid duplication, particularly in terms of collection. We would also suggest establishing a continuous monitoring system to help understand how the programme works, as well as helping to identify the most suitable students. In addition the system could track students after they leave, so as to help assess the long term impact of the programme.

Host schools – a number of schools have found the programme to be of benefit in terms of their social inclusion agenda. Other potential benefits include the opportunity for teachers and support staff to work with students in a different setting, and for schools to further develop wider community links through the clubs.

Finally – it is clear that xlerate with xl has got off to an excellent start, and having grown rapidly, we agree with the PTS that a period of consolidation and capacity building is appropriate. And it follows that support should be given for the programme's continued expansion and availability.

In spite of the desirability to further formalise some of the operational aspects of the programme, we would hope that the culture of learning and innovation which has underpinned its development continues, and that xlerate with xl is able to further evolve to help meet the needs of many of the young people in Scotland.

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The report, "National Evaluation of xlerate with xl January 2005 – January 2006", which is summarised in this research findings is available on the Social Research website at

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