

Workshop: „Space for fresh thinking”

Trainer: Heather Sim, Space Unlimited; Carolyn Barbour and Carrie Boax, Greenwood Academy

Workshop content/theme

Space Unlimited is all about challenging thinking. In our projects, teenagers from secondary schools in the UK get the chance to apply their ideas, talents and energy to real-life business issues facing organisations in both the private and public sectors.

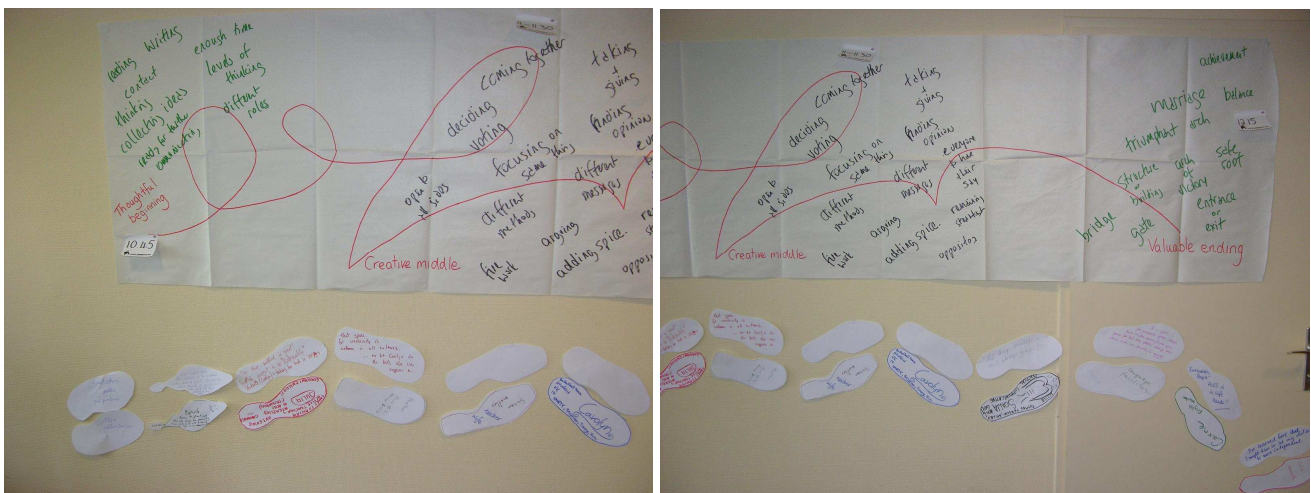
The ‘client’ organisation asks the Project Question and the young people design and manage their own process of enquiry and feedback. The organisation gets fresh insights and ideas to improve business performance; the young people build life skills, confidence and self-awareness. Risk and uncertainty face everyone in our projects.

We have learned that when adults are able to understand and manage their own behaviours in relation to risk, then the value of the experience for young people is significantly higher – and so is their creative output.

See briefing paper on page 3.

Aims

We designed the workshop to give participants a ‘mini’ Space Unlimited experience. We wanted people to try out our approaches – in particular the role of teachers in stepping back and letting the young people lead the project. The workshop was designed with the help of a group of young people from a school in Scotland who had previously worked on a Space Unlimited project. One of the pupils and one of the teachers and the chief executive of Space Unlimited led the workshop together.



Method(s)/Approach

First, we asked participants to swap one of their shoes with someone else. We invited them to reflect on the roles they play in their own life and to think about how it might feel to be someone else with a different role (or to wear someone else’s shoes as the native people of America might say!). They didn’t have to put on the other person’s shoe (size and hygiene constraints!), just study it, think about it and draw round it. We later used the shoe tracings as a way of getting feedback from participants.

Participants heard from each of the 3 workshop leaders about the 3 roles in a Space Unlimited project:- the Explorer, the Inquirer and the Keeper.

We also introduced participants to the 3 phases of a Space Unlimited project journey - the Thoughtful Beginning, the Creative Middle and the Valuable Ending. Working in small groups, the participants used their own bodies to create ‘life pictures’ to represent each of these phases. They then shared

opinions about what each 'life picture' seemed to suggest in terms of characteristics and typical activities appropriate for that phase of the Journey.

Then, still working in small groups, the participants had one hour to explore and respond to a Project Question. For this workshop, we decided to tackle a real issue facing the aces programme so the groups were asked "How can young people help build an aces community beyond the ongoing projects?" The actual Project Brief given to the groups is attached at the end of this report.

One person in each group was asked to volunteer to take on the Keeper role. All the others were asked to play the role of Explorer. The workshop leaders took on the role of Inquirer. In a normal project, this role would have been played by senior staff from the aces programme. The groups were encouraged to remember the phases of the Project Journey, and the actions and characteristics identified as appropriate to each phase.

At the end of the workshop, each group shared their ideas and insights. Later in the day, one workshop participant gave a brief summary of the ideas to the full conference. Flip charts containing written material summarising the ideas were handed over to the staff of the aces programme.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

www.spaceunlimited.org
www.nesta.org.uk/young-people-and-innovation/

Questions for workshop reflection

Students: How can young people help businesses to be truly open to new insights and fresh perspectives? Could you run projects like these to help organisations in your communities?

Teachers: What happens when adults step back and let the young people lead? How can you do more of this yourself, and enable other adults to feel confident doing so?

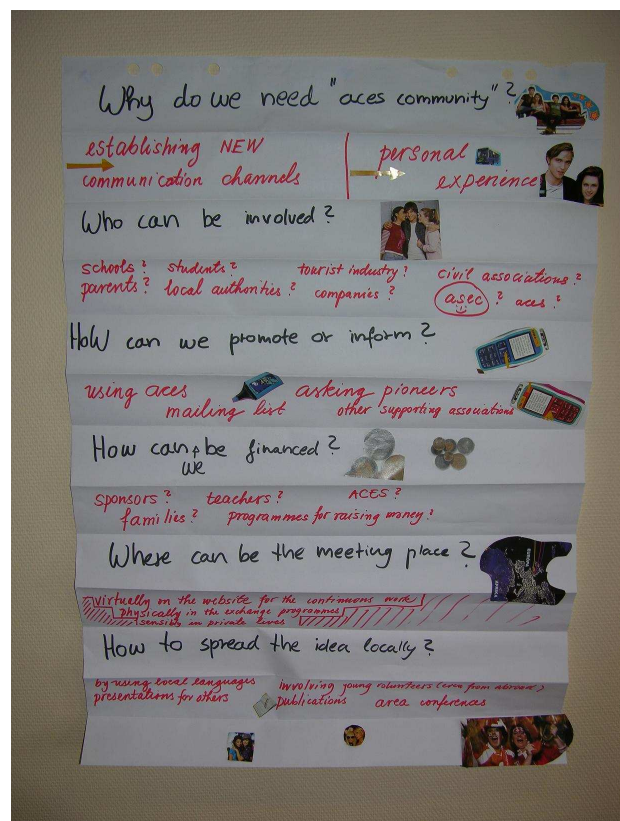
Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

The feedback was generally very positive. Participants reflected that teachers in all cultures can find it challenging to take a step back and remain in the Keeper role; some even felt that the workshop had created new insights about how to be an effective parent. There was also some interest in the Space Unlimited model itself – how it was funded and how projects were identified.

There were only 2 young people in the workshop and they did not seem to get as much value from it as the teachers. That might have been different if there had been more young people and therefore more opportunity for adults and young people to swap roles/ learn about the different challenges of each role.

Our Scottish accents may also have been a bit of a challenge. Although people apparently enjoyed listening to us!

All of the ideas were handed over to aces staff. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial if we had invited an aces director/ manager to be present at the actual handover session during the workshop to hear the ideas being presented live. There were some really interesting suggestions – especially about the potential of the aces network to become more than just a series of annual projects, and how to begin to enable ongoing connections and relationships between schools and communities.



Key suggestions for aces programme

The aces programme should:

- Think of itself as the sun, creating light and energy for participants throughout the network.
- Develop and run a social networking site.
- Let the site grow to reflect what schools and pupils really value – e.g. as well as activity directly connected to the aces projects, it could help connect people when they are travelling in each others' communities.
- Ensure the site and programme particularly helps smaller towns where opportunities to connect face-to-face with new people are more limited.
- Think of itself as a tree – it has to develop the main trunk, then the branches, then the leaves and the fruit.
- Help communities to become stronger inside each school – support schools to promote aces, make people curious about what it has to offer.
- Focus effort on communication – improve and increase communication channels; reach a wider set of people; connect with schools and communities that have not yet been supported on a programme.
- Remember that the most significant aspect of aces is people's personal experience.
- Keep asking lots of questions.

The Brief

The Organisation

The **aces** programme has established a network of schools in 15 central European countries. Each year, students and teachers collaborate to design and run projects based on a specific theme. Participants from each project then attend an annual conference to celebrate their work and share experiences and learning.

The Issue

Aces wants to create an 'aces community' – where schools and young people continue to participate and collaborate, even without a project, and to build an ongoing network of shared knowledge, mutual learning and innovation. The organisers of the aces programme would love to know what would encourage schools and pupils to help build this community.

The Project Question

“How can young people help build an aces community beyond the ongoing projects?”

Your Group

You will work in a group of about 5 or 6 people. You will be asked to play a specific role, either:

- The Explorer – looks into the Project Question and seeks to discover
- The Keeper – holds the space and supports the process.

The aces programme is the Inquirer – asks the Project Question and explains why it matters. The workshop leaders will also play this role today.

Your Schedule

You've got until 12.15.

Time is limited – but that's always true! So dig deep into all the creative talents in your group!

Think about how to have a thoughtful beginning, a creative middle and a valuable ending.

We'll give you reminders of time, and there's a coffee break at 11am.

The Handover

There are two opportunities to share your ideas and suggestions:

In the workshop at 12.15 – each group will have 5 minutes to feed back.

To the full conference at 15.00 – perhaps 5 minutes to summarise ideas from all 3 groups.