

## Chartered Association of Business Schools – Executive Education Committee Impact Case Study

### Innovation in Executive Education: Developing Active Citizenship – The Next Generation Awards, Birmingham Civic Society

#### Introduction

One of the current key projects of the Chartered Association of Business Schools' Executive Education Committee is '[To develop opportunities for showcasing innovation in executive education](#)'. More widely, the Chartered Association of Business Schools is revealing how business schools are delivering value to local and regional economies (Chartered ABS, 2016). There is also the international renewal of the idea of the civic university, one that celebrates community engagement as a responsibility of the university (Goddard, Hazelkorn, Kempton and Vallance, 2016). Indeed, Aston University is in the vanguard of rethinking business school relations with external stakeholders, such as its engagement with local citizens (Cameron, 2017). This impact case study evaluates how Birmingham Civic Society's Citizenship Committee is challenging existing notions of executive education by innovating with the concept of active citizenship among young people from all backgrounds in Birmingham. The mechanism to achieve this strategic goal is The Next Generation Awards. The Awards themselves have also just gone through their own incremental development, and the impact of that change is now emerging, which is reported here, as well as the emerging lessons being gleaned from the change implementation.

More specifically, the claim for innovating in executive education is three-fold. First, as part of their corporate social responsibility activities, executives and members from a variety of organisations (the authors) are volunteering and working as part of a charity (Birmingham Civic Society) to develop active citizenship in Birmingham. The authors form the membership of one of Birmingham Civic Society's committees, the Citizenship Committee. Their work is supported by a network of organisations which donate prize money and cover the cost of hosting The Next Generation Awards Final. This is education in the sense that the committee and the sponsors want to use their skills and knowledge to build citizenship capacity. This is not executive development in which executives would participate in continuous professional development.

Second, the Citizenship Committee is exploring how members of the [BPS Birmingham Future's Future Mentoring Academy](#) can nurture, develop and support the city's talented school children by successfully matching students with young professionals and senior leaders. The BPS Birmingham Future launched the Future Mentoring Academy in 2015. Young professionals have the opportunity to develop their own leadership skills whilst supporting school children and, in particular, benefit hugely from the experience of being out of their comfort zone. In turn, the students are developing their own skills and being encouraged to aspire to university and professional careers through their exposure to the mentor who becomes a role model.

Third, business schools and universities can help to refresh ideas that are already innovative, because of their access to a range of related research, in this case, project management practice, and their practical experience in supporting placement students. It has been noted that the Awards have gone through an incremental development, and Aston and Newman universities were part of a team of four which created the idea of a cash prize to facilitate the implementation of the winning ideas of The Next Generation Awards, and the mentoring of the winners. Previously, there was no

implementation phase. More than that, business schools and universities can relate what a school and their winning team are doing in practice to the latest theory – in this case study, the notion of “corporate volunteering climate” is extended to a public service organisation setting (Rodell, Booth, Lynch and Zipay, 2017).

Before expanding on the ideas highlighted above, it is important to understand the context of Birmingham and its Civic Society.

Birmingham Civic Society celebrates its centenary in 2018 and has consistently ‘worked to make Birmingham a better place for everyone. We are a membership body made up from a wide range of volunteers who encourage community engagement and promote pride in our city.’ (<https://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk/>). One of its core activities is ‘Inspiring the minds of young people through our Next Generation Awards’ (<https://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk/>). The Awards are managed through the Citizenship Committee which currently consists of the authors of this case study.

As Councillor Carl Rice, Deputy Lord Mayor, highlighted at the finals of the 2017 Next Generation Awards, Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe and, broadly, is transitioning from a city of makers to one of ideas. He added that Birmingham is known for its cohesion, how its citizens value community over individualism. The Awards is an example of how Birmingham takes young peoples’ ideas seriously, especially those about responsible community action.

### **The Next Generation Awards**

The Next Generation Awards has run for thirteen years, and over 28,500 pupils aged 11 to 14 have participated. It is ‘an assessed project-based programme designed to meet many of the requirements of the Key Stage 3 Citizenship Curriculum, and also to develop pupils’ Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills’ (<https://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk/citizenship/>). Particular skills being developed are: team-working, ICT, presentation, creative writing and problem solving.

The Next Generation Awards encourages young people to ‘work in groups to devise a plan to improve one aspect of life for people living in Birmingham, they develop 5 minute presentations that are then presented to an assessment panel and receive either a Gold, Silver or Bronze award depending on the calibre of their proposals.’

(<https://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk/citizenship/>). The Awards Programme is supported by Newman University, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Anthony Collins Solicitors, Professional Polishing Services Ltd, and local Birmingham charitable trusts and foundations, for example, the Heart of England Community Foundation.

As highlighted earlier, The Next Generation Awards have just gone through their own incremental development: ‘From 2016, we have awarded £1500 to the overall winner to help deliver their proposal in reality. This helps to ensure that our young people are making a real difference to their community and city.’ (<https://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk/citizenship/>). Two Awards were made in 2016, to the winner and the runner-up. Two Awards were made to ensure that at least one successfully completed during the first year of awarding a cash prize. The Birmingham Civic Society and Newman University awarded £1500 and mentoring support was provided by the BPS Birmingham Future’s Future Mentoring Academy to enable the winner and runner-up to put their projects into action through regular guidance and advice. The introduction of a cash prize was made to develop a wider set of skills including project implementation, managing a budget and keeping to

a timescale. Those receiving the cash prize were invited to present their idea and the work they had done at the 2017 Awards.

In October 2017, another £1500 prize has been donated by Newman University, and BPS Birmingham Future's Future Mentoring Academy will again provide a mentor from the Business Professional and Financial Services sector. The number of cash prizes has been reduced due to the difficulty of finding suitable mentors in the first year of awarding prize money. In addition, The Next Generation Awards scheme wanted to focus attention on the winning team. Given this is the second year of the cash prizes, the innovation is constantly under review in order to achieve the overarching aim of developing active citizenship.

The range of stakeholders involved in The Next Generation Awards is highlighted in Figure 1. There is Birmingham Civic Society's Citizenship Committee which manages the Award, though the Awards Project Manager runs operations. The Awards involve Birmingham's Secondary Schools. The winning school teams are supported by mentors from BPS Birmingham Future's Future Mentoring Academy. The work of the school teams and the mentors is facilitated by key sponsors, which donate the prize money and cover the costs of hosting the finals. A representative from the Lord Mayor's office of Birmingham City Council presents the prizes. Ultimately, citizens' lives are improved.

Figure 1: Key Stakeholders involved in The Next Generation Awards



### The Two 2016 Winners and Beyond

The winner of the 2016 Next Generation Award was Bartley Green School, mentored by Rickie Lovell of Achieve Physiotherapy. The 2016 runner-up was King Edward VI Handsworth for Girls and their mentor was John Bauckham. Bartley Green School won because the project aimed to tackle child obesity, by focusing on warning people about the dangers of sugar and the alarming proportion of sugar in many of the foods we find on the supermarket shelves. Clever posters were designed clearly illustrating the quantity of spoons full of sugar in a number of common snacks. The project will distribute the posters to all Birmingham Secondary Schools with the £1500 prize money. The project also created an inspired new food labelling approach that will clearly alert purchasers to the proportion of sugar in the products they are buying. King Edward VI Handsworth for Girls were

highly commended for their idea of delivering 'Homeless Care Packages' to make a real difference to the lives of our homeless citizens. The team had researched their idea by speaking to some of the leading charities who work with the homeless.



***The Next Generation Award Winner 2016 – Bartley Green School, Birmingham***

At the 2017 Awards, the winner, the runner-up and their mentors were invited to reveal the impact of their project implementation over the last twelve months. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, only the team from King Edward VI Handsworth for Girls was able to attend. Whilst the judges were deciding who had won the 2017 Next Generation Award, the compere for the finals asked a series of structured questions to identify the impact generated by the 'Homeless Care Packages' project of King Edward VI Handsworth for Girls, and to reveal what it was like to win an award of this type.



***The Next Generation Award Winner 2017 – King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls, Birmingham***

The team emphasised that they were proud to win and it was 'so rewarding' to put their project into action. In giving the audience a quick overview of the project, the team highlighted that they

created around three hundred care packages and then distributed them to the homeless in Birmingham through Reach the People Charity from October 2016 to September 2017. The project was mostly supported by the school and the independence of the students. Their mentor was helpful by recommending where to buy cheaper bags, thereby enabling them to help more homeless people. In the future, the school and the team intend to make this an annual event to increase the impact of their project, and is hoping to branch out to primary schools. Candidly, the advice to the 2017 winning team and mentor was to have ‘perseverance’ because there is ‘no profit and little gratitude’. However, it is important to ‘keep in mind the goal’.

From a theoretical perspective, unintentionally, the school and the team are adopting the latest research in organisational volunteering by adopting the concept of “corporate volunteering climate” in a public service organisation setting. Corporate volunteering climate refers to both employee belief in a cause and corporate policies to foster a sense of collective pride among employees (Rodell, Booth, Lynch and Zipay, 2017). Together, they drive an organisational culture of commitment to corporate and personal volunteering. In this case study, there is school, teacher and school children commitment to helping the homeless by expanding the original scope of the successful preparation and distribution of care packages.

The 2017 Final attracted the biggest audience yet, 120 school children, parents and business professionals from across Birmingham, which suggests that The Next Generation Awards is becoming even more popular. The winner of the 2017 Next Generation Award was King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls. They won because the ‘Growing Green’ project will work with local primary schools to make and maintain living wall planters, made from recycled milk bottles. When interviewed after the announcement, their delight was revealed when they exclaimed ‘It feels like we won the lottery.’ It is refreshing to witness such enthusiasm for active citizenship.

In 2018, the cumulative impact of the winning projects from 2016 and 2017 will be more visible to all Birmingham’s citizens. To this end, in 2017, the final was live-streamed for the first time in order to give citizens the opportunity to see how imaginative and inspirational the young people of Birmingham are, and we are seeking an appropriate social media platform so that all the past and future winners can share their successes and ideas.

### Key Learning

As with any impact case study, reflexivity is needed to identify opportunities for different types of learning when innovating in executive education. Two types have been initially identified: external and internal capacity building. First, externally, although the winning team has access to an experienced mentor, there might be additional help that Birmingham Civic Society’s Citizenship Committee can give a school. For example, some schools and their teams may need additional coaching and support to maintain momentum during implementation, especially if key staff leave the school or simply due to the already heavy workload of teachers in schools. As with work projects, some of the winning projects in The Next Generation Awards can take longer than a year to be implemented and to achieve their goals. In short, do teachers and managers need additional guidance and support? How can the role of the mentor be developed so they can more effectively help the winning teams and their schools?

Second, internal capacity building may be needed. The Citizenship Committee is exploring if the judging process needs to be adjusted to take account of the introduction of the cash prize. In



addition to assessing for the robustness of the citizenship idea that schools are presenting, crucially, is assessing for the ability to deliver becoming equally important? Indeed, can guidance be established which identifies early warning signs that the project implementation process is losing momentum, and have linked action to help? Having such capabilities will introduce a genuinely multi-party co-creation process. As part of the civic university mission, co-creation methods and their measurable impact are increasingly important (the first author has used this approach in his transformational change work in the public and private sectors, see [www.thetransformationproject.co.uk](http://www.thetransformationproject.co.uk)).

In conclusion, this impact case study has outlined innovation in executive education by revealing how active citizenship is being developed through The Next Generation Awards of Birmingham Civic Society. It would be exciting to scale-up the work outlined in the case study by perhaps spreading the idea to other regions, and to learn about similar initiatives elsewhere so that a corpus of activity can be mapped out and shared across business schools and their external partners. We welcome opportunities to discuss this innovation further.

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