

Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships

Tomillo Foundation
Madrid, Spain



Tomillo Foundation *Madrid, Spain*

Case study summary

Tomillo Foundation introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme as a progression route to their existing offer of intermediate apprenticeships. The programme is delivered in four sector areas which host a large proportion of employment in Madrid; hospitality, computer science, electrics and administration.

The programme, known as Basic Vocational Training, supports a target group of young people who are aged 14-18 in Madrid. Young people typically come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and have often left compulsory education without formal qualifications. The two-year programme is longer in duration than average pre-apprenticeship programmes. The two-year duration allows Tomillo Foundation to provide the intensive and personalised support that this target group of young people require to build the range of skills they need to enter the labour market, and in particular, for an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation.

This case study outlines the unique delivery methods used by Tomillo Foundation to deliver basic, vocational and social skills. Such approaches are considered effective in supporting young people who are furthest away from the labour market. The excellent progression outcomes

achieved by young people, with 97% of participants progressing to an intermediate apprenticeship in 2017, is indicative of how programmes can support young people furthest away from the labour market to achieve good outcomes.

Key programme details

- Young people attend Basic VET five days per week (Monday to Friday) for a period of two years
- Project Based Learning (PBL) is used as a method for supporting young people to develop the personal, professional and social skills needed to succeed in an intermediate apprenticeship and in their wider lives
- Each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is financially supported by a key employer, who also have input to the programme content, making it relevant to the needs of the labour market
- The cost per person on the pre-apprenticeships across the full two years is €9600.

Country context

Spain has one of the highest rates of early school leavers of all EU countries. In 2017, 18.3% of young people aged 18-24 had left formal education or training without qualifications¹, compared with an average of 10.6% in the EU. The latest figures also indicate that the proportion of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) was 13.31%, slightly lower than the EU figure of 14.2%².

Overall, there is a strong preference for higher academic education in Spain, even though the employment outcomes for university graduates are not significantly different to those for graduates of higher levels of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

A key issue in the Spanish education and training system is how effective different types of training are in meeting the skills needs of the economy. There is a gap between the type of education that young people receive and the skills that employers demand. In spite of the very high unemployment rates, employers in Spain continue to have difficulties in recruiting staff with appropriate professional qualifications.

In 2012, apprenticeship training became the core part of VET in Spain with the aim of improving transition to the labour market for Spanish young people. Formal apprenticeship programmes last for two years and include training in a company (minimum 20%) and at a VET school (maximum 80%). They are offered as a priority to young people aged 16-21 who have left compulsory education without qualifications.

Two levels of apprenticeship training are offered in Spain. Intermediate-level apprenticeships are for those who enter after completing compulsory secondary education, and higher-level apprenticeships are for those who have already completed their intermediate-programme or have finished upper secondary school. This enables direct access to university.

As part of the national reform to Vocational Education and Training, "Basic" Vocational Education and Training, a pre-apprenticeship model, was introduced in 2013 and has opened progression routes for young people with little or no qualifications to access intermediate apprenticeships.

The pre-apprenticeship at Tomillo Foundation

Tomillo Foundation is a private and independent organisation which was founded in 1983 with the purpose of contributing to social improvement and development in Madrid. The work with children, young people, families as well as wider communities, to empower them with the skills to allow them to take responsibility for their lives and their environment. Through education and employment, Tomillo Foundation aims to contribute to improving people's living conditions so that they can develop their full potential and play an active and responsible part in society.

The activities delivered at Tomillo Foundation are carried out by a team of people, mostly teachers, pedagogues and psychologists, who develop a range of programmes, as well as providing training alongside personal support and work orientation.

Tomillo Foundation introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme as a progression route to their existing offer of intermediate apprenticeships. The pre-apprenticeship is delivered in four sector areas which host a large proportion of employment in Madrid; hospitality, computer science, electricity and administration. In 2017, approximately 280 young people were enrolled on the programme across these sectors. The cost per person on the pre-apprenticeships across the full two years is €9600.

Young people who participate in Basic VET are:

- aged 14-18
- from local areas of socio-economic disadvantage
- not in education or employment (NEET)
- commonly early school leavers

"The young people have economic, social issues, and family issues so we try to deal with that. They have not had success academically in their school before, their motivation is very low, their skills are initially very low, and we need them to reach a certain skill level" (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

Model of delivery

The pre-apprenticeship programme coincides with the typical academic calendar in Spain and lasts for two years, which allows Tomillo Foundation to effectively support this target group of young people to build the range of skills they need to enter the labour market, and in particular for an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation.

During these two years, young people are supported to develop personal skills, professional and social skills. They attend the programme five

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipslm90&plugin=1>

days per week (from Monday to Friday), which allows them to gain first-hand experience of the commitment and responsibility required for an apprenticeship.

The programme is built around a three-tiered model, whereby young people progress through the programme developing their personal, professional and social skills in that order, before progressing to intermediate VET.

Preparatory activities and the sequence of learning is important in effectively preparing young people for work placements, and importantly, their progression to an apprenticeship. It is particularly important as young people on the pre-apprenticeship programme typically need support to develop their confidence and self-esteem as well their employability skills, before exposure to the workplace.

1. Personal development

Substantial emphasis is placed on supporting young people with their personal and social development. This is the key focus of activities during the first year of the programme. It is mainly carried out through classroom-based activities and learning where the development of personal and social skills is embedded within wider learning, for example basic skills such as literacy, maths and digital skills.

To meet the diverse needs of young people, Tomillo Foundation employ a range of qualified staff who have a strong commitment to working with the profile of this target group. In addition to classroom responsibilities, each staff member acts as a mentor for an average of five young people and are responsible for getting to know the economic, social and home situation of each individual. In addition, Tomillo Foundation can

draw on specialist support from social workers, psychologists and pedagogical staff. This means that young people receive very holistic and tailored support to meet their individual needs.

"Our teachers are very committed to working with this type of student profile. They could be anywhere teaching but they choose to work with these specific kinds of students. So initially, that is important." **(Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)**

2. Professional development

During year two of the programme, young people develop the key professional skills needed for their chosen vocational subject. This phase is delivered using Project Based Learning, a method specifically designed to be engaging and effective at motivating the target group of young people. Young people work as part of a group to design and develop a team project relevant to their chosen subject. In computer science for example, young people could be tasked with designing a prototype that meets a certain objective, e.g. designing a household composter which helps to dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly manner.

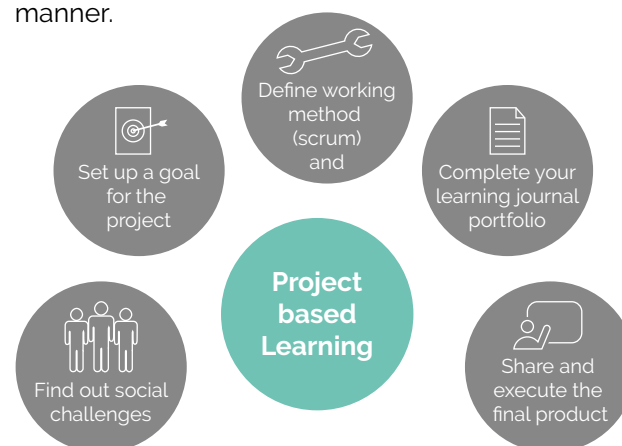


Figure 1. Project Based Learning at Tomillo Foundation

To support the project-based learning method, classrooms are set up to reflect the workplace environment to allow young people to develop meaningful professional and employability related skills for their chosen vocation. For example, the administration classroom resembles that of a real-life office, allowing young people the opportunity to gain insight to particular job roles. These methods help to promote the autonomy of young people as well as providing a way for young people to develop the range of soft skills needed for an apprenticeship, such as teamwork and decision making.

3. Social Development

Tomillo Foundation believe that a key factor in effective pre-apprenticeship training lies in providing young people with new experiences to expand their vision of the world around them and expose them to meaningful learning experiences that increase their long-term aspirations.

Young people are trained by a local company in methods to improve the energy efficiency of households in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Once they have successfully completed year one of the programme, young people visit local households and teach residents ways in which to improve their household efficiency. This has benefits for both young people and the communities involved. Through this experience, young people are positively integrated with the local community, and importantly have the chance to put into practice the soft skills they have developed over the course of the pre-apprenticeship such as communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork.

"All of those projects have to be related with the community. Our students, if you ask the rest of the neighbours, they are a problem for the neighbourhood because they are very problematic students, they maybe take their issues to the rest of the neighbours and to the rest of their communities so we need to change that vision for them so we make them do those projects to be related with the community and then we are changing the image, the initial image that the rest of the people in the community have about them." (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

Digital approaches

In recent years, Tomillo Foundation have incorporated a variety of digital approaches within their provision. With digital skills becoming increasingly important across the labour market, the inclusion of digital approaches is seen as a way of ensuring young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the same opportunities as their peers. This belief has led Tomillo Foundation to ensure digital approaches are embedded within all aspects of their delivery, and to update their programmes to include topics such as programming, robotics, 3D printing, database work and computer security. Such additions have helped to ensure young people not only have opportunities to develop essential digital skills but are given opportunities to acquire specialist IT related skills. So far, with the help of a partner organisation, students have achieved 200 certificates of MOS titles (Microsoft Office Specialist) which is a meaningful addition to their CV.

The preparation for MOS exams has been integrated into the pre-apprenticeship curriculum

and has been extended to each of the sectors. In 2017, a project known as 'Garage Lab' contributed to the digital transformation of the programme, promoted by Fundación Orange. Orange Garage Lab is a basic technology project designed and targeted at students on the pre-apprenticeship and results in the construction of a scalable prototype. As part of this, young people have created impressive work, such as video surveillance drones and pollution meters, waste composters and an automatic irrigation system that optimises the use of water.

Effective partnership working

Tomillo Foundation have excellent working relationships with various partners and employers, utilising these in a way that reflects their specific strengths to enhance the quality and content of the pre-apprenticeship. Their objective is to adapt the offer to meet the current demands of the labour market, meaning they work closely with employers with the aim of reducing the gap between employer needs and vocational training. Doing so maximises progression opportunities for young people into apprenticeships and other job roles.

The recent changes to the VET system in Spain give Tomillo Foundation some flexibility to adapt the content of the curriculum to the needs of employers engaged with the programme. Although, adaptations must be approved by the relevant Education Authority, Tomillo Foundation view this as an opportunity to tailor the content of their programme to the labour market whilst meeting the needs of their young people:

Tomillo Foundation have developed 'shared training' programmes with large organisations

in Spain, meaning that each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is supported by a relevant organisation, both financially and in terms of its specific vocational content. For example, in the energy, technology and IT sectors their training programmes have been developed with Fundación Telefónica and other companies to provide training in "Technical Assistant of Microcomputer Systems".

Tomillo Foundation have developed a positive reputation amongst employers in Madrid. One of the key reasons for this is that the Foundation has a dedicated department who are responsible for developing partnerships with employers. This strong and direct link with employers ensures that the pre-apprenticeship programme is tailored to the needs of the labour market. It also means that Tomillo can be responsive to changing labour market trends, by ensuring that young people on the pre-apprenticeship have the full range of vocational and soft skills that employers expect.

"Many people, many organisations, are very interested in working with us, because they know how we work. Our organisation is very professionalised. We talk the same language as the companies, so sometimes what happens is that the companies go to a school, but they are talking differently. We are very used to have relations with companies and that makes all this easier." (Álvaro Monsó, Teacher of Basic VET).

Tomillo Foundation also have good links with the Erasmus+ programme. Through this partnership, they can offer students internships abroad. For example, 14 young people have recently been able to gain work experience in the UK, in sectors such as hospitality, electricity, administration and computing.

Outcomes for young people

Tomillo Foundation have recently introduced an initial assessment of young people's soft skills and socio-emotional well-being. This assessment is informed by a European Framework and includes skills and attributes such as emotional intelligence, communication, teamwork, interpersonal skills and citizenship. Going forward, Tomillo Foundation will assess these skills before a young person begins their pre-apprenticeship and on an ongoing basis in order to progress and soft outcomes.

The most recent data illustrates that 97% of young people who completed the pre-apprenticeship at Tomillo have progressed to an intermediate apprenticeship or employment. Of these, 75% progressed to an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation, and 22% have gained employment elsewhere. The remaining 3% have not yet progressed from the programme but continue to receive mentoring from Tomillo Foundation.

Drop-out rates are considered an important indicator of the success of a learning or work programme in Spain, given the country's high proportion of early school leavers in comparison to other EU countries. Tomillo Foundation track their drop-out rates by drawing comparisons with similar programmes in Madrid. On a typical programme aimed at this target group, drop-out rates average at 50%. In comparison, the drop-out rate in 2017 on the Tomillo pre-apprenticeship programme was 10%.

For young people who have completed their pre-apprenticeship but are not yet ready to enter an apprenticeship or employment, they are able to stay on the pre-apprenticeship for up to two years, where they will receive further tailored support to bridge the gap to an apprenticeship.

Best practice – key success factors

- Sequenced learning that focuses on personal and social well-being, as well as employability skills, as preparatory activities to help prepare trainees for exposure to the workplace.
- Project Based Learning methods are an effective way of engaging young people to develop the range of soft skills needed for an apprenticeship, such as teamwork and decision making.