

**‘They’re already IN the labour market!’
Working pupils: challenges and potential for schools and
employers**

Draft paper presented to the Education and Employers Taskforce Conference
The point of partnership: understanding employer engagement in education
University of Warwick
15th October 2010

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Abstract

This paper draws on a national study of school pupils' part-time employment in Scotland to consider the opportunities for learning and skill development that part-time work may offer and whether and how schools and employers might build on its potential for learning. The paper argues that much part-time employment provides opportunities for pupils to learn and attain skills, especially core and employability skills, and to practise and model study, work and life balance. It identifies two apparent paradoxes: (i) employers feel that school leavers frequently do not have the requisite employability skills but at the same time school pupils work part-time and carry out activities that require such skills; and (ii) schools are working hard to set up work-related activities while at the same time largely ignoring the part-time employment of their pupils. In considering whether and how the learning and skill development from pupils' part time work might be used more effectively, the paper argues that certain underpinning principles would need to be observed and that action would be required to ensure that a number of key pre-conditions were in place. It concludes by indicating the dimensions of intervention and offers some practical approaches that schools, employers, trade unions and others might adopt.

Introduction

It has become commonplace to read that current and future economic and employment success require a different set of skills from workers than in the past. The need for young people to acquire such skills – variously defined and referred to as generic, soft or employability³ skills – that go beyond the type of knowledge and skills previously fostered by the traditional school curriculum is almost universally endorsed by policy makers, educationalists, employers, employer organisations and trade unions (eg Scottish Executive

³We recognise that there is considerable debate and discussion around the terminology used to describe skills (in this case *core*, *soft*, *generic* or *employability*); for the purposes of this paper we use the term *employability* throughout to indicate the skills covered by these terms.

2002; Curriculum Review Group 2004; OECD 2004; EU 2006; UKCES 2010). As part of the strategy to deliver such skills governments advocate work related learning and schools are working hard to develop a range of relevant activities with employers. But engaging employers in these activities is a constant challenge for schools and employers' dissatisfaction with school pupils' preparedness for work and their level of employability skills continues to be voiced in surveys and other research (eg Future Skills Scotland 2006; CBI 2007, UKCES 2010).

Yet a majority of school pupils have been able to successfully enter and hold paid part-time employment while at school. There is an apparent paradox here: employers feel that some school leavers do not have the requisite employability skills but at the same time school pupils work part-time and carry out activities that require such skills. It might also be viewed as paradoxical that schools struggle to develop opportunities for their pupils to engage with the workplace while the majority of those pupils already do so through their part-time employment (Payne 2001; Canny 2002; Howieson et al 2006; Percy 2010). It seems, however, that pupils' 'naturally occurring' experiences in the workplace are generally overlooked by schools in their efforts to develop links between education and employers ((Howieson 1990, Hodgson and Spours 2001, Semple et al 2002, McKechnie et al 2010) an issue not confined to the UK (Smith and Green 2001, NSW 2005). It is notable that the potential contribution of part-time employment is scarcely mentioned in a range of documents on work related learning and/or employability skills (eg, NESTA 2008; HMIE 2009; UKCES 2010) with only a very few exceptions, notably Determined to Succeed and the Tomlinson Report (Scottish Executive 2002, Tomlinson 2004) although the latter did so in the context of the recognition of school pupils' wider achievements rather than in the context of work related learning.

The relative invisibility of school pupils' part-time work can be partly explained by concern about its likely negative impact on educational (academic) attainment. Much of the research in the UK has focused on this rather than also exploring the potential for pupils to

learn while working part-time (McKechnie and Hobbs 2001). We suggest that it is timely to move beyond the focus on the effect of part-time work on school performance since there is now a substantial body of work to show that part-time working of itself is not associated with poorer academic outcomes, the issue is the number of hours worked: the research demonstrates that working above a certain number of hours or 'threshold' does impact negatively on academic qualifications. Working below this threshold does not detract from academic performance and indeed, the research shows working for a small number of hours has a positive effect on academic attainment compared with no part-time employment (McKechnie and Hobbs 2001; Payne 2001; Stern and Briggs 2001; McKechnie et al 2002; Percy 2010).

Concern about the exploitation of vulnerable young part-time workers and the ineffectiveness of the system for regulating the employment of pupils under 16 is another part of the explanation for its marginalisation in education policy on work related learning. Although of course issues about the welfare and health and safety of working pupils is not limited to those under 16.)

Its marginalisation is also related to the view that pupils' work is only 'pocket money jobs' or 'children's jobs' involving low levels of skill and little opportunity for learning and development (Mizen, Pole and Bolton 1999; Furnham 2006). Nevertheless, there is also a different perspective and a number of studies suggest that part-time work can be a valuable introduction to the workplace and which can help in the attainment of skills, encourage a greater sense of responsibility and the development of an adult perspective (Stern and Briggs 2001; Leonard 2002; Semple et al 2002; McKechnie, Hobbs and Anderson, 2004) However, a limitation of much of the research is the lack of data on what school pupils actually do in their part-time job, the activities they undertake and the skills they have to employ. This area, with a few exceptions, has been under-researched. Another key gap in the research on pupils' part-time employment is the employer perspective: this

has been almost totally neglected in research in Britain and internationally (McKechnie and Hobbs 2000, Anker 2001).

This paper aims to provide an insight into the activities and skills involved in pupils' part-time jobs and into the perceptions held by young people, educationalists and employers of its value (or otherwise). It considers the quality of the work that school pupils do and whether part-time work offers opportunities for learning and development. It explores how schools and employers might exploit its potential but also asks whether pupils' part-time work should be used in this way. Before doing so, we outline the data sources that the paper employs and set the scene by providing an overview of school pupils' involvement in part-time work.

Data sources and methodology

The main research that the paper draws on is a national study of the nature and extent of school pupils' part-time employment (Howieson, McKechnie and Semple 2006). The research was particularly concerned with issues of the quality and value of pupils' part-time work and its potential to contribute to their schooling. The study approached the potential for learning by obtaining the perceptions of pupils and adult stakeholders and also by investigating the activities which pupils carried out in the workplace. The research involved:

- a survey of a nationally representative 10% sample of S3/Yr10 – S6/Yr13 pupils in both local authority and independent schools across Scotland. The survey was administered to pupils at school within the school day over the months of January-March 2004. An 89% response rate was achieved giving a total of 18,430 respondents (S3/Y10: 6,043; S4/Y11: 5,919; S5/Y12: 4,135; S6/Y13: 2,333). To ensure that the sample was geographically representative, the data was weighted on the basis of the school rolls in each of the local authorities. The survey included both part-time work during term time and also in the school holidays.
- pupil focus groups (48 groups involving 376 pupils)
- survey of parents/carers (360 surveyed with a 76% response rate, n = 275)
- telephone survey of a sample of 42 employers reflecting the range of employment undertaken by school pupils. The survey included questions on reasons for employing school pupils; activities and training; views on the value of part-time work and on the idea of recognising it within pupils' schooling
- in-depth case studies of 12 pupils to find out what pupils actually did in their workplace; this involved event recording by the pupils while at work and observation by researchers as well as interviews with the pupils and their employers.

- interviews and group work with a range of teachers (46 participants)
- telephone interviews with members of the Scottish Councils Education Industry Network in all 32 local authorities in Scotland on the potential link between pupils' part-time work and education.
- interviews with seven Careers Scotland staff
- two surveys of all 32 Scottish local authorities on their systems for monitoring child employment and views on the formal recognition of pupils' part-time employment.

An overview of pupils' involvement in part-time work

In line with other research, the survey found that part-time work is a common experience among school students [Hobbs and McKechnie 1997; Payne, Percy 2010 refs]. Participation rose in line with students' age and stage of schooling: over half of S4/Y11 students were currently or had been in part-time work (56%) and by the S6/Y13 stage, 83% of them had done so (Table 1). By this point, students who had never had a part-time job were the exception.

Gender differences in part-time work are apparent after S3/Y10 with higher levels of part-time employment amongst young women. This gender divide is most likely explained by the sectors in which young people were found to work in the later school years: retail and catering sectors.

[Table 1 about here]

Among those currently in a part-time job at the time of the survey, three sectors predominated: retail (28%); catering (28%) and delivery work (18%). The remaining school students were employed across a range of job types: babysitting, hairdressing, office work, farm work, manual trades; cleaning, and a miscellaneous category. But the type of work that students were involved in varied across the school stages. Delivery work was mainly carried out by S3/Y10 and S4/Y11 students; the proportions employed in retail rose over the years and especially after S4/11. Overall there was a trend away from less structured employment in S3/10 and S4/Y11 to more formal types of employment in subsequent years.

In other analysis using multivariate techniques we found no significant differences between pupils from working class, intermediate and managerial and professional

backgrounds being in part-time employment after controlling for a range of other factors. Nor was pupils' attainment a key factor in whether or not pupils had a part-time job. It was not significant at all for pupils over 16 years and among younger pupils under 16 students' attainment made only a slight difference (Howieson, McKechnie and Semple 2010)

Learning from part-time work?

As noted in the introduction, information is lacking about what pupils do in their part-time jobs. In the national survey, therefore, pupils who were currently working part-time when surveyed were asked a range of questions about the activities they undertook, the skills required in their work, the extent of training they received and whether their job allowed them to learn skills and develop personal attributes.

Activities in the job

Pupils who were working at the time of the survey ('current workers') were asked to indicate the extent to which they had to undertake certain activities and employ particular skills in their part-time job. For each statement relating to an activity or skill they responded on a four point scale indicating the frequency of experience, ranging from 'never' through to 'all of the time'. Their responses demonstrate that inter-personal skills are a key requirement in pupils' jobs: a large majority responded that they had to co-operate with others all or some of the time to get the job done and also that they had to deal directly with customers all or some of the time (81% and 76%, Table 2) Their jobs were less demanding in respect of literacy related skills; their work offered some opportunity to work with equipment such as computers, cash registers and photocopiers but less scope to work with tools and machinery. It may be surprising to find that over one-fifth of pupils were involved in supervising or training other staff all or some of the time. The case study element of the research where we looked in-depth at the job activities of a small number of working pupils (12) tells a very similar story in terms of the activities undertaken by pupils in their part-time job: dealing with customers, team working; cash handling and working tills and, for a minority (two of the 12 participants), supervisory duties.

[Table 2 about here]

The extent to which pupils carried out the various activities varied by gender, school stage and job type which is unsurprising since these three variables are inter-linked. Since younger pupils tend to work in different sorts of jobs, it follows that current workers' stage of school made a substantial difference to the extent to which they carried out the different types of activities as part of their job (Figure 1). For example, co-operation with others and dealing directly with customers rose in line with pupils' stage from 2% of S3/Y10s who had to deal directly with customers all or some of the time compared with 89% of S6/Y13s. There were also substantial differences by stage in respect of using equipment, less so in relation to working with tools and machinery while S6/Y13 pupils were most likely to supervise/train others.

[Figure 1 about here]

The extent to which pupils undertook certain activities did vary by their type of job but a large majority of pupils reported that they had to co-operate with others all or some of the time in all jobs with the exception of delivery. Dealing with customers was another common activity for most pupils except those employed in babysitting, farming, and cleaning. The extent of involvement in the other activities varied more depending on the type of job that pupils had.

Opportunities to learn

Pupils were asked to judge the extent to which their current job gave them opportunities for learning and development on a four point scale from 'never' to 'all the time'. Their responses were generally positive about the opportunities of their part-time job in respect of learning new things, decision-making and organising their own time at work. They were also positive that their job gave them scope to develop their skills and just under a half judged their job as challenging to them. An aspect that would merit further qualitative work is how pupils interpret the concept of challenge: this does not appear to equate with the chance to learn

new things or to develop skills and abilities. Female workers gave more positive responses to every item than did male workers (ranging from +3% to +9%).

[Table 2 about here]

Figure 2 shows the extent of variation according to school stage. Positive responses rose in line with year group for the three categories: learn a lot of new things; develop skills and abilities; and the opportunity to make decisions with S5/Y12 and S6/Y13 pupils thinking that they had the most scope. This may well reflect the types of jobs that the older pupils work in and changes in their employers' expectations. This may also help to explain the lack of any significant variation by school, stage in the extent to which current workers found their job to be challenging.

[Figure 2 about here]

The scope that pupils' thought they had for learning differed by job type and the profile for each job varied as well, for example, babysitting scored highly on 'decision-making' compared to most other jobs but less so on 'learning a lot of new things' compared to quite a number of other types of work. Overall, those working in delivery were least likely to perceive their job as offering opportunities for learning a lot or some of the time.

In the focus groups (375 participants), while pupils perceived earning money as a major advantage of working part-time, an equally cited advantage was that it develops personal attributes: pupils saw part-time work as providing development opportunities, encouraging independence, responsibility and developing confidence. Once again aspects such as team working, problem solving and communication skills were mentioned. And along with the opportunity part-time work provided to earn money, a number of pupils noted that it also gave them a sense of the value of money and the need for budgeting.

Obviously these findings are self-reported by respondents. We have, however, as noted earlier a third source of information through the case studies of pupils at work on what pupils do in their jobs and the skills they use. The case studies involved pupils recording the

activities they were carrying out in their job, observation of them at work by members of the researchers as well as interviews with them and their employers. The case studies support the picture gained through the national survey and focus groups with identified benefits in respect of communication skills (with customers and co-workers); working with others/working with different people, greater confidence (eg with customers/strangers) (McKechnie et al 2010). The multiple methods employed in the case studies, especially the observation, enable us to have confidence in the self report by pupils: they are not being unrealistic in their assessment of the scope of their part-time job. Indeed, the case studies showed that the pupils tended to under-report what they did and the interviews and observation identified additional activities and skill demands. This suggests that working pupils are not used to thinking and talking about their work and are not being encouraged to reflect on their experience.

Overall, the findings indicate that part-time employment provides opportunities for learning and attaining skills, supporting the argument that such employment provides young workers with the potential to attain a range of employability skills.

Training received by school pupils in their part-time work

The extent of training is arguably an indication of the quality of school pupils' part-time jobs and the extent to which it might support their skills development and is an area that we asked about in both the pupil survey and the survey of employers.

Half of the pupils who currently had a part-time job had received some training when they started the job. Young women were more likely to have done so (f: 53% vs m: 46%) so but the main difference was that S5/Y12 and S6/Y13 pupils had a much higher incidence of training than younger pupils (S3/Y10: 33% vs S6/Y13: 75%). This is not surprising since older pupils are employed in more formal types of work than are the younger pupils.

The extent of initial training varied across different types of jobs, a high proportion of pupils employed in supermarkets, chain stores and fast food outlets reported initial training (89%, 88 % and 70%). Pupils working in these three areas were more likely to be employed by a major employer and other analysis showed that major employers were more likely to provide initial training.

Of course, a key question is the duration of any training. For a substantial proportion of the pupils, their training had lasted for 1-2 hours (42%). For just under a third, their training had taken a whole morning or afternoon or a whole day (32%). A quarter received training of more than a day's duration. Older pupils tended to experience longer duration training.

Just under half of pupils who had received initial training reported that they were being given training on an on-going basis (47%). Again, the same pattern is evident in respect of school stage - older pupils were more likely to report continuing training than younger pupils (S6/Y13: 59% vs S3/Y10). The extent of continuing training also varied by type of work with pupils employed in hairdressing, manual trades, supermarkets and chain stores reporting the highest levels (72% 67%, 64% and 62% respectively). For the majority of pupils their training did not result in any formal certification: 11% had received a certificate.

Our data on training from the pupils' survey is supplemented by information from the employers' survey on the training they provide to their young workers. A majority (35 of 42) indicated that their pupil employees receive initial training and a large minority (17) were able to point to ongoing training. As we might expect there was some variation in the training provided by employers, only in part sector related. For example, in the Delivery sector training appeared to be restricted to familiarising the employee with the delivery route. In the other sectors we found a wide variety of initial training and ongoing training. This variation did not appear to be sector dependent suggesting that in all of the sectors there are examples of what we might refer to as low and high intensity training. Employers also noted opportunities for employees to gain some certification related to their training experiences.

The examples given here ranged from certification of attendance at training days through to specific certificates relating to food hygiene and lifesaving.

The existence and extent of the training received by school pupils in their part-time employment is perhaps surprising but is highly relevant to debates about the quality of the work they undertake and to the feasibility of making use of their part-time employment in their schooling. The findings indicate that at least some pupils who are in part-time work are experiencing the continual learning required by a worker. This relates to the point we made earlier about the way in which pupils' part-time work can be seen as introducing them to the need for lifelong learning.

The employer perspective

We noted earlier the lack of research on employers' motivations and practices in respect of the employment of school pupils. This is an important omission given the prevalence of part-time working and, in particular, if we are to be able to consider the possibility of including part-time employment within the scope of work related learning. It is important to know why employers recruit school pupils, their views on the value of part-time work; and their response to the idea of making use of pupils' part-time work within their schooling.

In this section we draw on the telephone survey of 42 employers in four contrasting local authority areas. The employers reflect the range and type of employment undertaken by school pupils. The two types of employer that are missing from our sample are hairdresser and large chain stores (the former due to pressure of work in salons and the latter because of the need for local stores to gain clearance from Head Office which was then not forthcoming). The employers who took part were categorised into delivery (4), retail (13), catering (12) and Miscellaneous (13). Of the 42 employers, 25 employed ten or less employees; 16 had between 11 and 50 and only one had more than 50 employees.

It is evident from employers' responses that many young people are pro-active in seeking out employment: this was how a number of them had recruited pupil workers.

Informal networks and “word of mouth” also plays a role in recruitment. A few employers used advertisements, though it was rare for these adverts to specifically state that they were looking for young school aged applicants.

A common assumption is that employers turn to young workers in order to save on costs. Such a view has its roots in the international literature of child labour and the historical practices in developed economies such as Britain. While we did find examples of cost based reasons for employing school aged workers, for example in the Delivery and Retail sectors, a wider set of reasons were given. Cost did not appear to be the main reason for the majority of employers who emphasised other reasons for employing school students. In the case of the Retail, Hotel/Catering and Miscellaneous sectors the importance of flexibility and availability was often cited. School students are willing to work at less popular times (eg cover the 4.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. shift, or work on Saturdays) and to work fewer hours per week than adults. In some cases the employers suggest that adults would not view the jobs as viable or in some cases appropriate for them.

Some employers were recruiting school students because of what they brought to their business, sometimes in respect of specific skills or interests, or linked to their motivation and attitude eg ‘a breath of fresh air’. A small number of employers expressed an altruistic reason that it was good for the young person to be employed and it would give them useful experience.

We asked the employers to compare part-time work and work experience in terms of their value to a young person’s development or future career. (Under half of the employers had been or were involved in the work experience system.) The majority of employers (27) considered part-time work to be more valuable than work experience while seven judged work experience as the more useful. Four others rated both equally useful and four didn’t know. One reason for judging part-time work as the more valuable experience was that it indicated some initiative on the part of the pupil in gaining employment. They also argued that part-time employment involved a more extended experience of work than work

experience and allowed school students to engage with the workplace as a “real” employee: ‘part-time work is more real’ and ‘part-time work gives you the full picture’. In another study by one of the authors that examined the learning from Education for Work activities and from part-time work, employers participating in work experience programmes identified differences in the pupils they had on placement depending on whether or not they had a part-time work and those who had not. Those with experience of part-time work were thought to use their initiative more; recognise that the job ‘had to be done’; had more insight into the requirements of the workplace and what was expected of them; were better at dealing with the public, were more mature and settled in more quickly (Semple et al 2002)

Developing the learning potential of pupils’ part-time work

The extent of use

Our research, in common with other studies, found that the extent to which schools made any structured use of pupils’ part-time work was extremely limited (Aust refs, Semple et al 2004). It should be acknowledged that this is not only an issue for part-time work but appears to be a more general problem in respect of the extent to which connections are made between classroom subjects and work related activities (eg HMIE 2009) Both teachers and pupils were able to identify some classes such as Personal and Social Education, English, Maths and Business Studies where part-time work was mentioned or drawn on but there was no evidence of the systematic use of pupils’ part-time work in classes or embedding in the curriculum. A number of pupils in the focus groups noted specifically that teachers sometimes referred negatively to part-time work and that they avoided any mention of their part-time job since they expected the disapproval of school staff.

It appeared that many educationalists – school staff and those involved in education industry links – were reluctant to bring up the topic of part-time work not only because of perceptions of its adverse effect on school performance but also because of anxiety about the current system of permits for pupils under 16 who work part-time job. These pupils should have a permit from their local authority but this system was widely seen as ineffective, a view

borne out by our survey of local authorities and national survey of pupils . The latter found that only 11% of under 16s who were currently working had the required permit.

Educationalists were wary of appearing to endorse an activity that many younger pupils were, in effect, undertaking illegally.

Looking specifically at the various work related learning activities being offered by schools - work experience, vocational pathways and enterprise in education inputs (eg such as enterprise projects, employer visits, mock interviews etc) - we found little evidence of any links being made with pupils' part-time work or even an acknowledgement that some of the pupils undertaking these WRL experiences already had exposure to the world of work through their current or past part-time work. Stakeholders perceived that work experience – the most common work related activity for pupils - served a different purpose from part-time work and our analyses of the different type of job sectors and employers involved in each supports this. In the study on the learning from Education for Work activities and part-time work referred to earlier (Semple et al 2002), pupils rated their part-time work as especially valuable in relation to developing their communication, problem solving and working with others skills and thought that what might be termed employability skills were more likely to be gained from part-time employment than work experience. In reporting these findings we are not suggesting that work experience is not a worthwhile and beneficial activity, rather that part-time work and work experience offer different but complementary opportunities for learning and that the potential for part-time work to contribute to the aims of work based learning should be explored.

The case for part-time work

As we noted at the beginning of this paper, employers frequently express concern that young people leave education without the necessary awareness of and preparation for the workplace and lacking in skills such as communication, customer handling, problem solving and team working (Future Skills Scotland 2006, UKCES 2010). It is this awareness of the requirements and realities of the workplace and scope to develop generic skills that part-time

work can offer. Summarising the key points from our account of the study above, the majority of pupils reported that they dealt with customers and had to co-operate with others to get their jobs done. Just under half worked with equipment and over a quarter of pupils worked with tools and machinery. Dealing with paperwork was a task for nearly a quarter of pupils and one in five had some supervisory or training role. Half had received some kind of training in their job. The majority of working pupils judged their work as allowing them to develop skills, as having the potential to teach them new things and at some level allowing them to make some decisions. These findings from the national survey of pupils were endorsed by the in-depth case studies of working pupils. The research also found that employers valued part-time work as a real introduction to the workplace for pupils and judged it as making a contribution to their development.

In considering the case for part-time work, another aspect is worth discussing: the opportunity it offers pupils to model the *learning-work* balance. For those intending to continue into further or higher education after school, it is an opportunity to practise being ‘the learner who works’, an experience likely to be useful for students employed part-time throughout their period of study. There was also evidence in our research of S5/Y 12 pupils weighing up their use of time and their priorities and deciding to give up their jobs to concentrate on study in S5, the most important study year in Scotland for applicants to university. More broadly, it was also a chance for pupils of all attainment levels to practice *life-work* balance; pupils with part-time jobs were more likely to be fully engaged in social, leisure, school and home activities (Howieson et al 2010).

This leads us to pose the question whether schools and employers should make use of the possibilities that part-time work can offer for learning and development. In the next sections we consider some issues of principle and practice that need to be addressed in deciding the answer to our question.

Underpinning principles

In considering whether part-time work should be drawn on as a learning experience we would argue that there are two basic principles that have to be acknowledged and any approach tested against. One is whether the pupils concerned want to make use of their part-time work in this way: it must be their choice. In the focus group element of our study we presented pupils with a range of ways that schools might make more use of their part-time work. The whole idea was obviously a very novel one for the pupils. Overall, they were divided in their views on the principle of schools making more use of part-time work in their schooling with a substantial minority being unsure about the idea. It is clear that considerable discussion would have to take place to make sure that pupils were giving a considered opinion.

A second and related principle is the impact that efforts to use pupils' part-time work involving schools might have on the experience itself. Would efforts to do so undermine the very aspects of part-time work identified as worthwhile ie as a way of pupils developing maturity and independence, operating as an adult in an adult environment, engaging in problem solving and being able to make mistakes and then dealing with the consequences (viz Mark Twain's comment 'I never let my schooling interfere with my education')? The more formal the approach, for example if it were to involve any formal assessment and possibly certification of pupils' work, the greater the danger of this is likely to be. A further impact might be on the dynamic relationship between employer and employee, changing it from an employer-employee relationship to that of employer-pupil. Any approach needs to respect the autonomy of the pupil as an independent worker in the workplace

We therefore argue that the principles of pupil choice and preservation of the unique benefits of part-time work would need to be respected.

Pre-conditions

We also suggest that if there is to be a concerted attempt to use part-time employment in the context of work related learning, in particular to persuade school staff that, on balance, it can be a positive experience, then certain pre-conditions need to be addressed.

One is the need for an effective system of regulating the part-time employment of pupils under 16. The DfE is currently funding research on how the current system might be made more effective or whether possible alternative approaches are required, and this may lead to changes. (This study is being conducted by the authors.) Without changes to the way the current permit system operates, it is unlikely that schools will be prepared to engage with the possibility of drawing on the part-time employment of the under 16 year old pupil group.

A related pre-condition concerns pupils' hours of work. We have referred a number of times to the concern that working part-time can have a detrimental effect on school performance and we have pointed to the strong body of research that shows that a negative impact is dependent on the number of hours that pupils work. In our study we found that most working pupils, around two-thirds, were employed within the 'threshold' hours but this did leave a substantial minority who were working hours associated with a damaging effect on their school work. If schools are to be encouraged to take account of pupils' part-time work they need to be assured that pupils are not working excessive hours. Employers need to be encouraged to develop good practice in this respect, for example the use of contracts limiting the hours, working at appropriate times and being flexible at periods when pupils will be under pressure such as exam periods. This might be done via schools' existing business partnerships with employers and through employer organisations and trade unions highlighting the issue and suggesting models of good practice.

A third pre-condition is awareness - raising and attitude change to tackle the negative stereotypes and misperceptions of pupils' part-time work among educationalists. As we have pointed out, they generally underestimated the nature, extent and level of demand of school pupils' part-time work; and more recent research (Howieson et al 2010) found many school

staff and indeed pupils were quite unaware that a part-time job might contribute achievements and skills to their record of wider achievement. Their views on the effect of working hours need to be put into perspective by the clear body of evidence on this issue.

Awareness-raising about part-time work with employers would also be productive to highlight the possibilities for them to exploit the opportunities that part-time work offers to help develop the employability skills of young people in their employment and to begin to consider how this might be integrated into their general workforce development strategies. Such awareness-raising could be approached at several levels: DfE and Scottish Government; education-industry organisations; employer organisations and trade unions.

Possible approaches

A key aspect of the study on which this paper is based was to consider the potential for linking part-time employment experiences with the school curriculum and to consider the ‘... opportunities for certification of appropriate part-time work...’ (Scottish Executive, 2002a). Our initial work on the idea of certification quickly led us to broaden the scope from ‘certification’ to ‘recognition’. The former was clearly too restrictive and excluded a number of potentially valuable approaches. It is notable that the Tomlinson Report suggests that wider activities (including part-time work) ‘would typically not be assessed formally’ (P 38, para 82, Tomlinson 2004). Certainly formal certification with its associated demands in terms of quality assurance, moderation etc would pose a particular challenge and would run the risk of undermining both of the principles set out above. A number of approaches are possible and these may vary in relation to (at least) two dimensions: one is the extent to which schools, employers, and other bodies or individuals should be involved and the other is the formality of the process. These dimensions are represented in Fig 3. We have included a column called ‘pupil and A N Other’ since the process would not always have to involve schools and employers but might be facilitated by, for example, a careers adviser, youth worker, coach/mentor or someone working with pupils at risk of falling into the NEET category. It might also be a parent.

[Figure 3 about here]

It is not our intention in this paper to offer fully developed strategies to make use of pupils' part-time employment but to illustrate instead some of the approaches that might be considered.

An example of an *informal approach by schools with no employer involvement* would be the use of pupils' part-time work within the subject curriculum, for example, in Business Studies, Modern Studies or Personal and Social Education. In Australia, Billett and Ovens (2007) devised a series of guided reflection exercises for use within school with the aim of using students' part-time employment to address educational goals in learning about work and the world of work. It is worth noting that Billett and Ovens found that the success of their intervention depended partly on the teacher's knowledge of, and the value they ascribed to, the school students' part-time employment. This underlines the importance of awareness-raising and attitude change among educationalists.

Another approach would be to link part-time work into personal review. This could be in relation to *existing school approaches to pupils' personal review, planning and recording of achievement activities*; depending on the nature of the recording process this might have some element of formality. Personal review might not be school-based: *pupils undertaking a web-enabled self-review* of skills learned on their part-time work might do this with no involvement of others (except for the creation of the web resource of course); alternatively another individual (friend, family member, youth worker, careers adviser) might help to 'talk them through' their self-review of skills. Another example of an approach which pupils might undertake with or without support comes from New South Wales where a *web-site has been developed by the Department of Education and Training* which includes advice on how to get the maximum benefit from part-time work and includes planning and negotiating tasks, roles and responsibilities.

Skills review could be mapped against benchmarks. In Scotland a pilot to develop and evaluate a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Profiling Tool to be used as part of the career guidance process with school pupils offers an example (Whittaker and Anderson 2010). The project involved a careers adviser working with pupils to help them review and map the learning and skills gained in an experiential activity chosen by the pupil (which could be part-time work) with the aim of enabling pupils to benchmark their learning and skills to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework as a way to help them in their career planning, for example, in deciding the type and level of learning or training programmes they would apply for. This approach could be done in school by a careers adviser or in pupils' workplace by, for example, a Trade Union Learning Representative or by an N/SVQ Assessor.

A number of Sector Skills Councils have developed *Skills Passports* for their sectors to be used by employers and employees and an approach to developing the learning potential of part-time work would be for employers to include their pupil workforce in this system. The basic principle of Skills Passports is that they provide a verified record of an employee's skills, qualifications and achievements which is hosted online and automatically transfers to their CVs (Inspire Scotland 2008). There is currently considerable interest and development in schools, further and higher education in relation to e-portfolios and there would seem to be potential for developing linkages between these different record systems.

An approach focusing on the work place might be the development of an '*Investors in Young People*' Award which would involve employers with, where possible, the TU learning representative. This might encourage good practice with young people in the workforce, and include pupil workers, young people who have left school and young people on work experience or work-related learning activities from school, college and university.

Our last example links trade unions and schools. The *TUC and the STUC* currently have resource packs for use in schools that include sections on work experience including a

workplace investigation assignment for pupils, allowing them to gather evidence of key skills' or functional skills' achievement for use in a citizenship or similar project. The skills gained by pupils working part-time are barely mentioned: resource packs such as these might be developed to cover the experience of pupil workers.

Conclusions

Debates about the possible value of school pupils' part-time employment have taken place at a general level, lacking, with only a very few exceptions, specific detail and evidence (eg Leonard 2002). One of the striking findings of this study was the lack of knowledge among educationalists about pupils' part-time work: they very much underestimated the extent of part-time working and, especially underestimated the level of demand of some part-time jobs and their contribution to pupils' skill development. This study, we hope, goes some way to providing evidence on which judgements can be made about what school pupils' part-time work can offer as an introduction to the workplace and in terms of skill development. The findings support the view that school pupils' part-time work exposes them to a number of the skills that employers identify as problematic. While few pupils have part-time jobs in areas that they plan to develop full-time careers in, their part-time employment experience can offer a means of enhancing their employability skills.

Our research demonstrates that for many pupils their part-time employment provided opportunities for them to learn and attain skills, especially core and employability skills. We acknowledge the variability in part-time work in terms of skill demands, (not all part-time work might have the necessary 'quality') but we also suggest that in considering the value of the activities that many pupils undertake in their part-time work, it should be remembered that what might seem relatively undemanding for experienced adult workers may pose a number of challenges and offer opportunities for learning to those new to employment. This relates to the point made by the UKCES study that employability skills are dynamic and

should be conceptualised as a continual process in which the employability skills that an individual needs will vary depending on the point they are at in their career / continual process (UKCES 2010). While some commentators have argued that pupils' jobs are low skilled and meaningless (Mizen et al, 1999; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986), our data adds weight to the findings of other research that what may be classified as low skilled jobs do have value for young people (Hutson and Cheung 1992; Leonard 2002). Huton's and Cheung's study of 16–18-year-old students, for example, showed that participants viewed their jobs as having value and as contributing to learning about the 'real' world. The authors note that such positive views on work are surprising since they relate to jobs that are considered as 'unskilled'.

While many educationalists' view of part-time work is dominated by concern about pupils working excessive hours and the possible effect on their school performance, the experience through part-time work of learning to balance study, work and other activities can be a valuable one. Occupying a dual role as learner and worker is arguably modelling a position that is increasingly required in the context of lifelong learning and continuous workforce development. In arguing this we are not downplaying the danger of pupils working hours beyond the level that is appropriate to age and as we have indicated and repeat below, an effective system of regulation is urgently required coupled with appropriate advice and support from schools, parents and employers.

We re-iterate that if part-time work is to be used in the context of work related learning then it must be left up to pupils' to choose whether or not to use their job in this way. If they are willing to do so then any approach must recognise their status as independent workers and should not be 'colonised' by education otherwise much of its value will be lost.

If the potential of part-time work for learning is to be realised then a number of steps need to be taken at national and local level and by both education and employers. We have noted three preconditions. The first is an effective system for regulating the part-time

employment of children under 16, a task for central and local government together. In England this issue is being addressed at the time of writing. Legislation is one part of the answer but it only applies to pupils under 16 and the question of the working hours of pupils, also requires awareness-raising amongst employers and joint working between employers, trade unions and schools: again, a challenge to be addressed at both national and local level. The third pre-condition is awareness-raising and attitude change, primarily amongst educationalists, so that there can be free and open discussion of the reality of pupils' experiences in the workplace in order that skill development can be captured and reinforced and the challenges working pupils face acknowledged and pupils supported to deal with them: local authorities and their schools would be the prime movers here with central support. This requires accurate information on the nature and extent of pupils' experiences to be made available in initial and continuing teacher education and in teaching and learning materials for pupil use. We have suggested some examples of number of practical approaches to harnessing the potential of pupils' part-time employment for learning and skill development and these and other approaches need to be further developed and piloted.

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Table 1: School pupils' experience of part-time work

School year	Current job %	Former job %	Never worked %	(n)
All	38	21	41	(18207)
S3/Y10	29	19	52	(5936)
S4/Y11	34	23	44	(5847)
S5/Y12	43	21	35	(4099)
S6/Y13	63	20	18	(2325)

Table 2: Current workers: activities in their job

% responding all or some of the time	All	M	F
How often do you do the following to get your job done?			
Co-operate with others	81	74	87
Deal directly with customers	76	67	82
Spend time reading/writing/paperwork	24	24	25
Equipment eg computers, cash reg	48	38	55
Work with tools, machinery	28	39	19
Supervise/train others	22	20	24
	(n= 6454)		

Table 3: Current workers: opportunities for learning in their job

% responding all or some of the time	All	M	F
How often my job...			
... allows me to learn a lot of new things	62	57	66
... allows me to develop my skills and abilities	70	63	75
... allows me to organise my own time at work	59	58	60
... is challenging to me	49	47	50
... allows me to make decisions	65	62	68
	(n= 6904)	(n=2775)	(n=3683)

Figure 1: Current workers: how often do the following activities in their job by school stage (% responding all or some of the time)

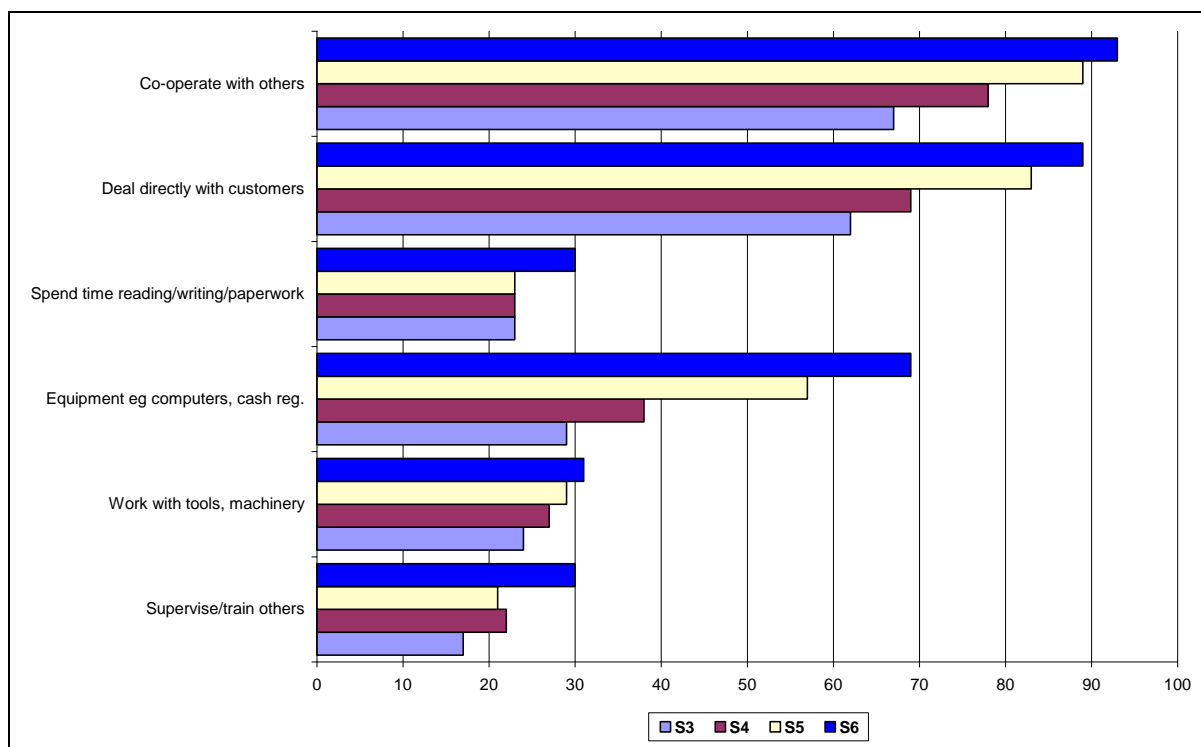


Figure 2: Current workers: opportunities for learning in their part-time job by school stage (% responding some or all of the time)

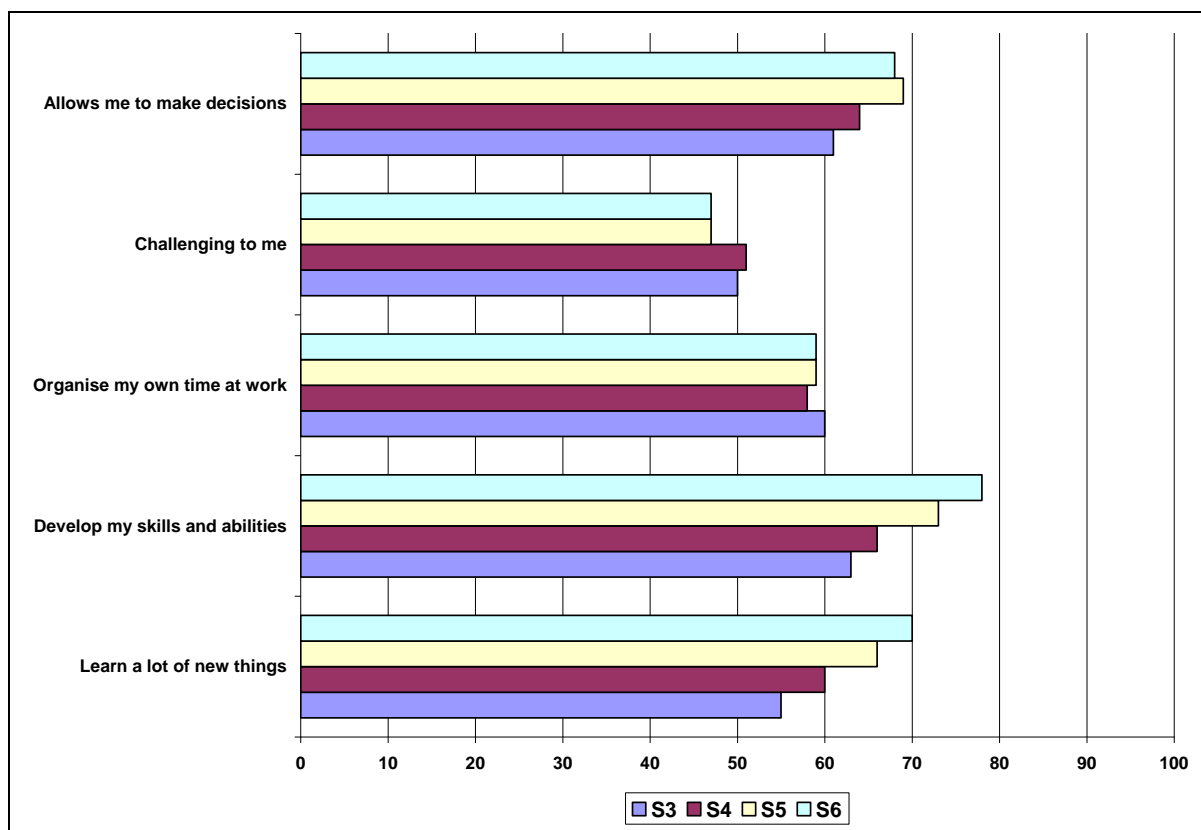


Figure 3: Approaches to drawing on the learning potential of part-time work

