

EDGE Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys: Report



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1 Summary

Different types of learning in schools

- 1.1.1 Stakeholders continue to believe that schools favour academic qualifications over vocational ones. Half of secondary teachers and 39 per cent of parents said their school favoured academic qualifications, with very few saying it favoured vocational ones. However large proportions (around four in ten) also thought it balanced between the two. By contrast with school, sixth form/FE colleges are seen as much more balanced, with the majority (57 per cent) of lecturers saying their college had a balanced view. These opinions have not changed significantly since the 2008 research.
- 1.1.2 The results show a continuing concern over the balance between specialising and a generalist approach. Teachers believe that the education system forces children to continue with subjects which do not benefit them (net agreement scores of 43 per cent). This is not significantly different from last year, however independent school teachers in particular have become less likely to agree with this view. Many parents believe that the system forces children to narrow their options too early (net agreement score of 41).
- 1.1.3 Teachers continue to feel confident that they understand their students, showing no change since last year. Children at Key Stage 3 continue in general to feel understood by their teachers, and compared with last year are slightly less likely to disagree that their teacher knows what they like and don't like at school, showing a small scale improvement.
- 1.1.4 As in 2008, the majority (60 per cent) of children are involved in practical learning often at Key Stage 3, however this drops to around half by Key Stage 4. While many children thought that the level was about right, there continues to be demand for more practical learning at both key stages. However young people at Key Stage 4 were slightly less likely to say there are too few practical projects this year than last (46 per cent compared with 55 per cent), despite reporting the same amount of practical learning. This higher level of satisfaction is driven primarily by girls rather than boys. Parents also continue to feel there is too little practical learning, but were slightly less likely to say this than in 2008. Teachers were the group most satisfied with the level of practical learning, but 39 per cent still thought that there was too little.

- 1.1.5 Teachers and parents expressed a strong opinion that a reduction in practical learning would have negative impacts, in particular on readiness for further/higher education, learning speed and levels of interest in school. Two thirds (65 per cent) of teachers thought students would generally be less ready for the workplace if practical learning were reduced, while 57 per cent thought students would be less interested in school. However 23 per cent of teachers also thought young people would be better prepared for university, showing a concern among some teachers that practical learning may take time away from ‘the basics’ of education.
- 1.1.6 Parents (with a child who prefers practical learning or a mixture of academic and practical) voiced similar concerns to teachers. Around half thought their child would be less happy if practical learning were reduced, and around a third that they would learn more slowly. However, as with teachers, there was also a concern over readiness for the next stage; 15 per cent said their child would be better prepared for further or higher education.
- 1.1.7 The results suggest that teachers may feel better equipped to support practical learning than last year. However, since the question format was not identical, this should be considered as indicative only.
- 1.1.8 Schools’ top priorities continue to be helping children to achieve their potential (85 per cent), performance in qualifications (80 per cent) and increasing confidence (77 per cent). So far, the economic climate has not significantly impacted on priorities regarding workplace readiness or university.

Attitudes to different types of learning

- 1.1.9 A mixture of academic and practical learning continues to be the most popular option at both key stages, although, as with last year, the results show that the popularity of academic learning increases between Key Stages 3 and 4. However at Key Stage 3, parents were significantly more likely this year to say their child prefers to learn academically (22 per cent compared with 15 per cent in 2008), although they were not significantly less likely to choose any other individual option. At Key Stage 4, there was also an indicative (but not statistically significant) increase in those saying their child prefers to learn academically. Children at both key stages continue to support a mixture of learning types, however there is more support overall for options relating to practical learning than ones relating to academic learning.

- 1.1.10 There were few very significant changes to attitudes around vocational qualifications. All groups continued to believe on balance that vocational learning provides a good education and often leads to a good career, with employers generally the most positive. However teachers have become slightly less positive on vocational learning providing a good education, while children and young people have become slightly more positive on this.
- 1.1.11 Stakeholders do not generally believe that vocational learning is only for those who don't do well at school, with only between a sixth and a quarter agreeing with this. Children and young people were slightly more likely to agree but also slightly more likely to disagree, therefore their overall opinion has not changed, however the results suggest they may be slightly better informed about vocational qualifications compared with last year. Employers have become slightly more positive on this measure, while the view of parents and teachers have remained constant.
- 1.1.12 As in 2008, most stakeholders do not believe that young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university. Teachers, employers and children and young people have all become slightly less likely on balance to hold this view than last year (although the differences are small). However parents, the group most likely to believe this, have not changed their opinion since last year; a quarter still believe that university is the only suitable route for young people.
- 1.1.13 Despite generally positive views of vocational qualifications, many stakeholders continue to believe that taking such qualifications may rule out university as an option. Around a third of young people and employers, and slightly more parents and teachers, agreed with this view. Teachers have become slightly more likely to believe this than in 2008, while young people have become indicatively less likely. Around a quarter to a third of each group expressed no opinion, suggesting that understanding of the progression route from vocational qualifications may remain limited for some stakeholders.
- 1.1.14 There is a continuing belief among many children and young people that academic qualifications are more important than vocational ones, however views in this area have changed since the 2008 survey. At Key Stage 4, young people have become less likely to see academic qualifications as more important (36 per cent compared with 44 per cent) and more likely to see the two types as equally important (50 per cent compared with 43 per cent). Key Stage 4 children were also more likely to think their parents valued both types equally and less likely to think they favoured academic qualifications, although this may

reflect the change in their own views rather than actual change on the part of parents. At Key Stage 3, by contrast, there was an indicative shift towards favouring academic qualifications, although this development is not statistically significant so far.

1.1.15 Employers continued to have a balanced view of different qualification types, with little change since last year's research. Similar proportions chose academic and vocational as most important, and the largest group (44 per cent) thought both equally important. The results continue to show a large variation by business size, with smaller organisations more in favour of vocational qualifications, and larger ones more in favour of academic. Medium sized organisations were indicatively more likely to favour vocational qualifications compared with last year.

1.1.16 Employers believe many soft skills are better developed by vocational qualifications; these include team working, business and customer awareness, and attitude and enthusiasm. However academic qualifications are believed to be better for developing numeracy, communication and literacy, and basic IT skills. These results show little change since last year, although the proportion thinking vocational qualifications are better at developing business and customer awareness has decreased slightly (from 54 to 49 per cent).

There is a continuing perception among some teachers that vocational qualifications are mainly suited to less able individuals. More than a third (37 per cent) believed this of NVQs/SVQs, and 31 per cent of qualifications such as BTECs and City and Guilds. This shows no change since 2008. Although take-up of Apprenticeships has increased, teachers' view of them has not improved. Awareness of Diplomas has increased only slightly, and views among those who are aware have not changed significantly.

Making your mind up

1.1.17 As in 2008, most children (over 90 per cent) at Key Stage 3 were aware that GCSEs/Standards are available at their school, however awareness of vocational qualifications was lower; only 14 per cent believed vocational options to be available at their school. Awareness of Diplomas as an available option remained similar to 2008 (12 per cent), with older children and girls more likely to be aware of them.

1.1.18 Nine out of ten Key Stage 3 students intended to take GCSEs (Standards), with only five per cent considering a Diploma and a similar proportion thinking about vocational qualifications in one form or another. At Key Stage 4, the majority (68 per cent) planned to

take A-levels (Highers) while six per cent selected vocational qualifications such as NVQs and five percent planned to take an Apprenticeship. Again, these results are in line with the 2008 findings.

- 1.1.19 For those thinking of taking a vocational qualification after Key Stage 3, the main reasons are the connection with problem solving, teamwork and 'learning by doing', while at Key Stage 4 this is more closely related to getting the job they want and because by that stage at school they believe that they struggle with academic subjects. For those planning to take academic qualifications, many (half at Key Stage 3 and a third at Key Stage 4) have never considered anything else.
- 1.1.20 Most children discuss their decisions with parents. At Key Stage 3 over half had consulted their parents; this rises to 86 per cent for Key Stage 4 students. Those in Key Stage 4 were more likely to have received advice from most sources, while at Key Stage 3, 38 per cent had not yet spoken to anyone about their options.
- 1.1.21 Parents are most likely to prefer academic routes for their children but significant proportions are also open to vocational routes. At Key Stage 3, 71 per cent thought GCSEs an appropriate route (71 per cent), however one in five were open to vocational qualifications, and 15 per cent to a Young Apprenticeship. At Key Stage 4, around one in five parents felt that vocational qualifications or Apprenticeships might be appropriate while 63 per cent thought A-levels / Highers suitable.
- 1.1.22 By Key Stage 4, most children (69 per cent) felt well informed about their options, however at Key Stage 3, only 37 percent felt well informed, indicating that many children are making decisions based on limited information. All sources of information considered, around a third at Key Stage 3 felt that there is too little available about what to do after Year 9 (S2), while 38 per cent at Key Stage 4 had the same view regarding the next stage. These figures are in line with the 2008 findings.
- 1.1.23 Parents believe they have a good overall knowledge of the qualification options available, however this does not translate into good knowledge of all the individual options. Aside from GCSE/ Standards, under half of parents had a good knowledge of any qualification. Knowledge of Diplomas has not significantly increased since last year.
- 1.1.24 Forty-four percent of young people (16 to 24) thought the careers advice they received in school was good, while 38 per cent of parents had the same view. However perceptions of

the advice received at school worsen dramatically with increasing age of the young person. Those who thought the advice poor are most likely to have wanted better advice on getting a job.

Business in schools

- 1.1.25 Opinion remained evenly balanced among parents on whether or not children have enough opportunities to experience the workplace while in school, while teachers were much more likely to think there were not enough opportunities; 51 per cent had this view while only 28 per cent thought there were enough opportunities.
- 1.1.26 Teachers were likely to think there was insufficient employer engagement in their school and this situation has not improved since last year. Sixty-nine per cent thought there was too little and only 32 per cent that there was the right amount; very few thought there was too much. Those with a nominated member of staff for employer engagement in their school were more likely to think the balance was correct.
- 1.1.27 Employers did not feel well informed about opportunities to engage with school. Two thirds felt that their organisation was on balance not well informed; this is in line with last year's findings. Small organisations were less well informed than large ones, and private sector organisations less than public ones. Work experience (79 per cent) remains the activity most employers are aware of by a considerable margin, however awareness of Apprenticeships has increased from 48 to 57 per cent.
- 1.1.28 Most young people (65 per cent) had taken part in work experience, but many other activities had very low participation. Young people were likely on balance to say they want or would have wanted more engagement activities; around half the sample felt that more of most types of activity would be beneficial.
- 1.1.29 Employers remained generally positive about engaging with the education sector. Two thirds were on balance more willing than not and only three per cent were not at all willing. Of those employers that currently do not engage, 44 per cent were on balance in favour of doing so in the future, while ten per cent indicated that they would definitely not be willing to do so. These results are in line with last year's findings.
- 1.1.30 Sixty-four per cent of employers said they currently engage with the education sector; again this shows no change since 2008. Engagement was lower in the private sector (54 per

cent) than the public (92 per cent) or the third sector (76 per cent), and lower in SMEs (43 per cent) than large organisations (78 per cent).

- 1.1.31 The top benefits for employers continue to be recruitment opportunities and a better community image; very few of those who engage thought there were no benefits to the business.
- 1.1.32 The main barriers for employers remain a perceived lack of time and resources, concerns about bureaucracy, and whether there are suitable or appropriate opportunities. Some employers had concerns about having students in their workplace; indicating that the concept of engagement for many employers remains narrow and related only to work experience placements.
- 1.1.33 Young people identified a broad range of factors as important for a good work experience placement, but were particularly concerned with the variety of work available (48 per cent) and the preparation that goes into accommodating them (45 per cent). Teachers and employers were more focused on the work being meaningful, and the attitude of the young person, although employers also agreed with young people on the importance of good preparation.

The main factors which make for a poor placement were identified by young people and teachers as an unhelpful team or manager, only doing routine or mundane tasks, and having no plan in place or poor preparation. Young people and teachers were in agreement on these negative factors. Responsibility, objective setting and feedback were mentioned less, indicating that it is engagement with the task at hand that is of primary importance.

Young people were generally positive about their own work experience placement. The vast majority (92 per cent) said they approached it with a good attitude, while 71 per cent said they had a supportive manager and 64 per cent that they were given some responsibility. However around a third had a less positive experience, reporting that they did the same thing all day (38 per cent, or only did mundane or routine tasks (32 per cent).

There is less of a concern this year over the economy impacting on employer engagement. Only 22 per cent thought their engagement might decrease due to the recession compared with 30 per cent last year. Almost two thirds (63 per cent) expected no effect, compared with 48 per cent in 2008.

Education and the workplace

- 1.1.34 Few employers have a positive opinion of the 'employability' skills of school and college leavers they have recruited. Only four percent rated the business awareness of 16-17s as good or very good, a figure that was only slightly higher (11 per cent) when they considered 18-19s. General IT skills were considered strong; three-quarters rated young people good or very good. Across the range of other employability skills such as literacy, numeracy and communications, only around a quarter of employers were positive about the skills of 16-19s. Those with direct experience of engaging with schools have a more positive view, but with the proportion rating 18-19s as 'enterprising' rising from 21 per cent amongst unengaged employers to 35 per cent of the engaged, the majority of engaged employers still disagree.
- 1.1.35 When they think about graduates they have hired, assessments of employability skills are higher, however with business awareness and customer care rated good or very good by 24 and 35 per cent respectively, opinion is not overly positive. It was revealing to note that young people in work identified business awareness and 'having an enterprising attitude' as their weakest employability skills at the point at which they entered working life. Fewer than half rated their own skills in these two aspects as good or very good and these skills headed the list of those that they would have most liked to develop more when at school or college.
- 1.1.36 Employers believe that employability skills such as teamwork and enthusiasm are very important. In a list of qualifications and skills that they feel are important when hiring graduates; achievement, soft skills, references and work experience are considered important by more employers than the degree course followed or grades achieved at A-Level or GCSE. They stated that in their experience candidates with vocational qualifications are stronger than academic new starters in aspects such as team work, attitude/enthusiasm and business/customer awareness. However those who had followed an academic path were considered particularly stronger in numeracy, communications/literacy and IT skills.
- 1.1.37 There was a notable upwards shift compared with last year in the proportion of employers who believed that there are too many people in the job market with academic qualifications. This may be as a direct result or perception of the recession and the number of university leavers who have not found employment.

Apprenticeships

- 1.1.38 Knowledge of Apprenticeships remains limited among teachers and has not significantly improved since 2008. The 'net knowledge' score was -36, showing that many more teachers had poor knowledge than good knowledge. This is despite a higher than ever take-up of Apprenticeships in 2008/2009.
- 1.1.39 Teachers continue to be fairly negative about Apprenticeships, with almost half disagreeing that they are a good alternative to A-levels. In this respect teacher's views have not changed since last year. Teachers also continue to misunderstand young people's views, with many believing that young people do not consider Apprenticeships a good alternative.
- 1.1.40 In fact, young people are likely to consider Apprenticeships a good alternative to A-levels, and their view has not changed significantly since 2008 in this regard. However young people's expectations of what their parents think have changed. While in 2008 young people underestimated their parents' support for Apprenticeships, this year it seems they have slightly overestimated it. Young people also overestimate teachers' support.
- 1.1.41 Parents' views of Apprenticeships have become slightly worse since last year, with only 36 per cent thinking them a good alternative, down from 43 per cent last year. Parents are also less likely to believe that their children will see Apprenticeships as a good alternative compared with last year, however this is not born out by the results from young people.
- 1.1.42 Employers remain the most positive group regarding Apprenticeships, but their view has also got worse since last year, with only 46 agreeing that Apprenticeships are a good alternative, compared with 55 per cent in 2008.

14-19 Diplomas

- 1.1.43 Awareness of Diplomas among employers and parents has not changed significantly since last year. The proportion of teachers saying their school offers Diplomas has also remained constant.
- 1.1.44 Teachers' opinion of Diplomas has declined since last year. The net score for Diplomas offering a high quality alternative has decreased from +7 to -3. This is a cause for concern. Teachers are also less likely to believe that Diplomas will increase practical learning. Employers also continue to believe that Diplomas will be seen as having a lower status than GCSEs and A-levels with over two-thirds (69 per cent) stating this.

Education Policy

- 1.1.45 All groups think the Conservatives most likely to improve education and training, although employers (44 per cent) are significantly more likely to hold this view than the other groups. It is notable that significant proportions of all groups said they did not know. This is unsurprising for young people aged 16 and over, but 30 per cent of parents, 26 per cent of teachers and 19 per cent of employers also did not express a view. This suggests low awareness of specific education policy for any party.

2 Methodology

- 2.1.1 In September to October 2009 YouGov conducted surveys of four key stakeholder groups. This was the second year of a three year programme. The research was carried out online and sample was sourced from YouGov's panel of 250,000 adults and young people in the UK.

Figure 1: Headline details about the four stakeholder surveys

Stakeholder group	Dates	Sample
Children and young people	1 st to 5 th October	2,198
Parents	17 th to 24 th September	1,013
Employers	25 th September to 5 th October	1,001
Teachers	2 nd to 8 th October	1,034
Total	-	5,246

- 2.1.2 Further detail about the sample composition of each stakeholder group is provided in turn below beginning with the survey of children and young people.

Children & young people

- 2.1.3 For the survey of children and young people the sample frame was fixed as those aged between 11 and 24 with an even spread of ages across that range. Sample was drawn to be representative of region and socio-economic classification based on pre-known data about their household and the data was weighted for age and gender of respondents. 953 respondents were included who also took part in the 2008 wave of research, allowing us to track decision making and changes in their attitudes as they get older. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 2: Breakdown of the children and young people's survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	2198	2198
Gender	Male	1099	1100

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Female	1099	1098
Age bands	11 to 12	314	272
	13 to 14	314	336
	15 to 16	314	327
	17 to 18	314	352
	19 to 20	314	301
	21 to 22	314	299
	23 to 24	314	311
Which of these best describes what you are doing at the moment?	At school or college in full time education	1109	1106
	At University/ other higher education institute	504	509
	Working full time	350	348
	On a training course	16	16
	A combination of working and studying	69	68
	Doing an Apprenticeship	12	12
	Not working studying or on a training course	138	139
Current Key stage	Key Stage 3	467	454
	Key Stage 4	324	335
	Key Stage 5	286	283
School/ college type	State/ Comprehensive School	709	705
	Grammar/ State Selective School	78	77
	Special School	10	11
	Academy	32	31
	Independent/ Public/ Private School	60	62
	Sixth Form College	77	76
	Further Education College	120	122
	Tertiary College	3	3
Government Office of the Region	North East	122	119
	North West	230	229
	Yorkshire and The Humber	214	211
	East Midlands	165	166
	West Midlands	191	191
	East of England	203	206
	London	258	260
	South East	331	330
	South West	185	185
	Wales	114	113
	Scotland	186	188

Parents

2.1.4 The sample frame for parents was defined as parents or carers of at least one child currently aged between 11 and 18. The sample was controlled and weighted using the national population as a proxy for representativeness amongst parents. The data was weighted for region and socio-economic classification; sampling ensured a broad 50/50 split between gender, and age was not considered a key variable. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 3: Breakdown of the parents survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	1013	1013
Gender	Male	482	531
	Female	482	531
Age	18 to 34	74	73
	35 to 44	365	365
	45 to 54	433	433
	55+	141	142
Social Grade	ABC1	557	569
	C2DE	456	444
Government Office of the Region	North East	44	44
	North West	118	112
	Yorkshire and The Humber	89	89
	East Midlands	76	75
	West Midlands	91	89
	East of England	97	102
	London	130	132
	South East	142	150
	South West	89	84
	Wales	51	49
	Scotland	87	87
Working status	Working	740	742
	Full time student	28	28
	Retired	35	35
	Looking after family full time	119	118
	Unemployed	34	33

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Not working for health reasons	49	49
	Not working for other reasons	8	8

Employers

2.1.5 The target sample profile for employers was to survey 1,000 managers / decision makers with responsibility for recruitment as a component part of their job. Respondents were not human resources personnel, but rather middle and senior management. The sample was drawn to be representative in terms of business size (as measured by the number of employees) and industry sector. The data was weighted on business size and industry sector using National Statistics data. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 4: Breakdown of the employers survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	1001	1001
Government Office of the Region	North East	36	33
	North West	91	97
	Yorkshire and The Humber	65	61
	East Midlands	57	61
	West Midlands	96	92
	East of England	108	114
	London	138	131
	South East	196	190
	South West	88	92
	Wales	42	47
	Scotland	84	83
Organisation size	Micro (2 to 9)	132	229
	Small (10 to 49)	137	190
	Medium (50 to 249)	120	162
	Large (250 or more)	613	418
Sector	Private sector	723	743
	Public sector	208	172
	Charity/ voluntary sector	70	71
	Advertising/Marketing/PR	31	33
	Aerospace	6	6
	Agriculture/Chemicals/Forest Products	14	18

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
Industry	Automotive	16	16
	Computers/Electronics	63	71
	Construction	68	67
	Consumer Goods	23	22
	Education	88	88
	Energy/Mining	13	14
	Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	93	88
	Government/Military/Public Service	90	70
	Hospitality/Recreation	34	40
	Media/Publishing/Entertainment	24	23
	Medical/Health Services	84	78
	Pharmaceuticals	21	19
	Retail	60	65
	Service	61	68
	Telecommunications/Networking	23	21
	Travel/Transportation	39	31
	Other	151	163

Teachers

- 2.1.6 The target sample for teachers was to achieve 800 responses from working secondary school teachers and 200 from those in specific sixth form or other Further Education colleges (FE). The final survey sample consisted of 912 secondary teachers and 122 from FE colleges. Sampling was controlled for balance across age, regions and ages of pupils taught. The data was not weighted and the key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 5: Breakdown of the teachers survey sample

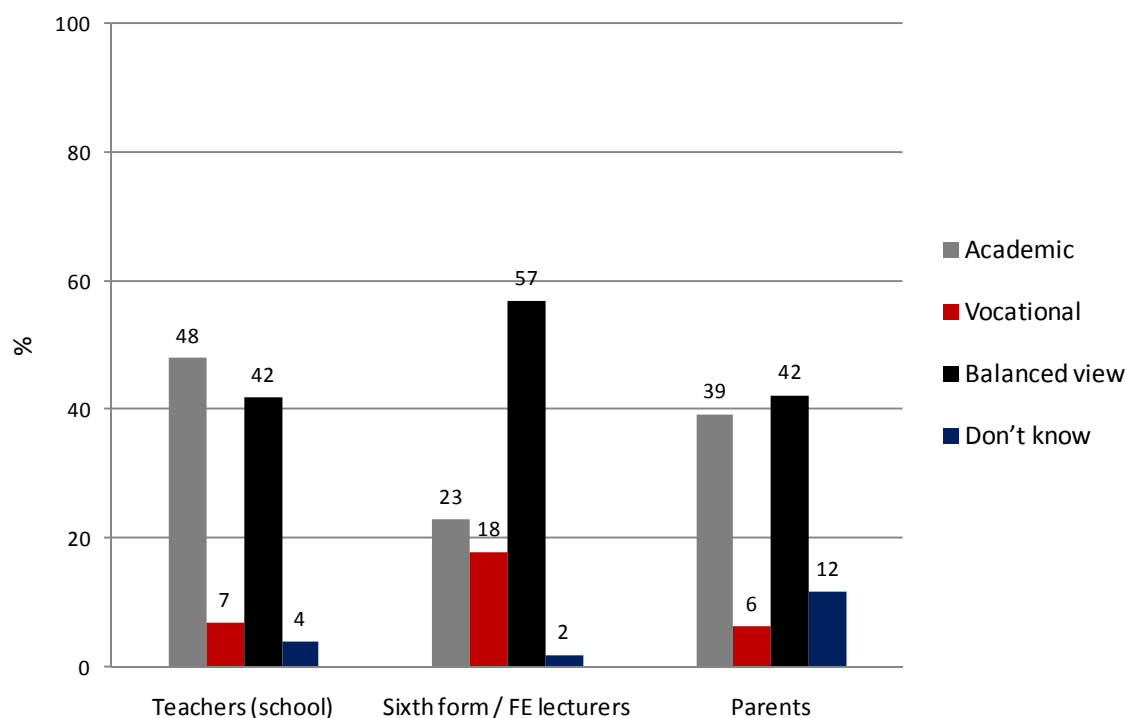
Variable	Value	Number
Base	Base	1,034
Gender	Male	458
	Female	576
Age	18-34	288
	35-44	200
	45-54	230
	55+	316
Government Office of the Region	North East	44
	North West	122
	Yorkshire and The Humber	103
	East Midlands	82
	West Midlands	96
	East of England	100
	London	112
	South East	156
	South West	82
	Wales	48
	Scotland	89
Role	Secondary teacher	912
	Sixth form / FE lecturer	122
For how long have you been a teacher or lecturer?	Up to 2 years	90
	Between two and five years	146
	Between five and ten years	201
	Ten years or more	596
Institution Type	State School	712
	Independent/ Public/ Private School	105
	Sixth Form/FE/ Tertiary	131
Age Group(s) Taught	11 to 13	719
	14 to 16	781
	16 to 19	607
	19 plus	169
Type of subjects taught	Academic	722
	Vocational	70
	Mix of both	205

3 Different types of learning in schools

3.1 How balanced are schools between academic and practical learning?

3.1.1 Schools are not seen to be particularly balanced between academic and vocational learning, and this view has not changed since 2008. Significant proportions of both secondary teachers (48 per cent) and parents (39 per cent) continued to believe that their (child's) school favours academic qualifications, while very few thought the school favoured vocational qualifications. However around four in ten of these groups also believed that the school has a balanced view between the two types of qualification. Further education colleges are seen as much more balanced than secondary schools, with fairly similar proportions of college lecturers saying that the college favours academic (23 per cent) and vocational qualifications (18 per cent), and the majority (57 per cent) believing that it is balanced.

Figure 6: Do you feel that your school/ your child's school favours academic qualifications, vocational qualifications or has a balanced view?



Base: 912 teachers, 122 sixth form/FE lecturers, 1,013 parents.

3.1.2 As in 2008, there were significant differences between different types of school. Among teachers in state schools, 47 per cent thought that their school had a balanced view and 45 per cent that it favoured academic qualifications. However in the independent/ private sector, only one in ten teachers surveyed thought that their school had a balanced view, with the vast majority (89 per cent) saying it favoured academic qualifications. No teachers in private schools thought that their school favoured vocational qualifications. This suggests that opportunities to take vocational qualifications remain limited in private schools.

3.2 Widening or narrowing choices

3.2.1 Teachers continued to believe that the education system forces students to continue with subjects that are not beneficial to them. Sixty-three per cent agreed with this compared with only 20 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 43.

3.2.2 While there was no significant change here since 2008 (net score of 47), this overall figure masks variations between different institution types. Those in the state sector were only slightly less likely to have this view than last year (a net score of 47, compared with 55 in 2008), but those in private/ independent schools were significantly less likely (18 compared with 31 in 2008). Among those in FE colleges there was no change.

Figure 7: The education system makes students continue with subjects that do not benefit them (net agreement score)

	Total	Institution type		
		State	Private/ Independent	Sixth form/ FE/ Tertiary
2009	43	47	18	29
2008	47	55	31	28

3.2.3 The other side of this debate is whether the system forces children to narrow down their options too early. Parents were of the overall opinion that it does, with 56 per cent agreeing and only 15 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 41. This overall view is not significantly different to that expressed in 2008 (net score of 39), however the balance of opinion between mothers and fathers seems to have changed. While mothers have a fairly similar view to last year, fathers have become significantly more likely to think that the

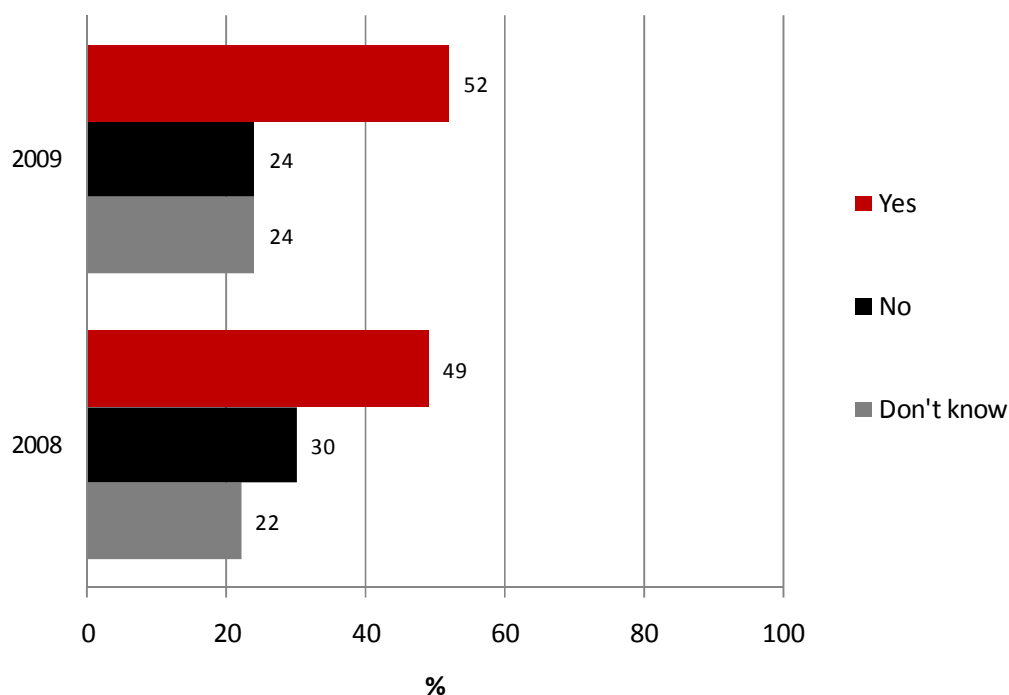
system forces children to narrow their options too early, with a net agreement score of 39 compared with only 28 last year.

3.3 Do teachers understand their students' strengths and weaknesses?

3.3.1 As in 2008, parents agreed on balance that their children's teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses, with a net agreement score of 38 (no significant difference since last year).

3.3.2 Children at Key Stage 3 also remained likely to feel that their teachers understood them, with over three-quarters (77 per cent) agreeing that their teachers understand what they are good at, compared with only 11 per cent disagreeing. When asked whether their teachers know what they like and don't like at school, children were slightly less likely to disagree than in 2008 (24 per cent compared with 30 per cent last year). However they were not significantly more likely to agree.

Figure 8: Do you think that your teachers know what it is you like and don't like doing at school?

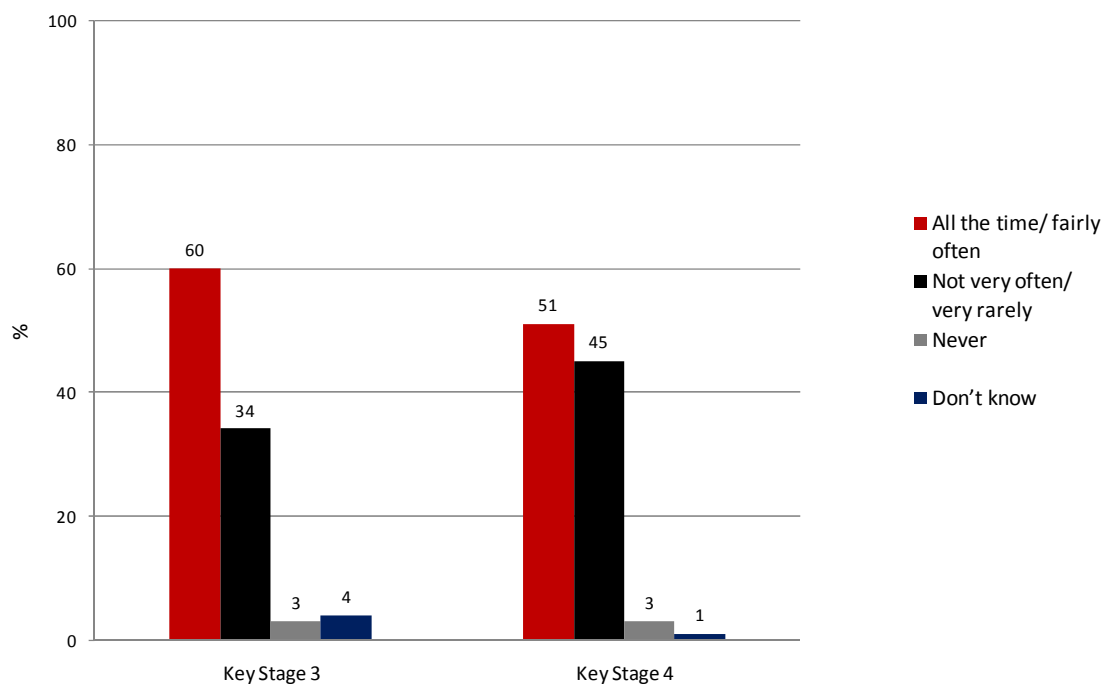


Base: Key Stage 3 children (454)

3.4 Involvement in practical projects

- 3.4.1 As in 2008, the majority of children at Key Stage 3, and around half at Key Stage 4, are regularly involved in practical learning. At Key Stage 3, 60 per cent said they were involved in practical projects fairly often or all the time, while 34 per cent said they were involved in practical projects rarely or not very often, and three per cent said they never did projects of this kind.
- 3.4.2 Comparing the two key stages, there was again a small but significant reduction in practical learning by Key Stage 4. Only half (51 per cent) of children at this stage said their lessons included practical projects fairly often or all the time, while 45 per cent of Key Stage 4 pupils said they were involved in practical projects rarely or not very often. However children at Key Stage 4 are no more likely than those at Key Stage 3 to say they are never involved in practical projects (three per cent). The decrease between these stages is probably linked to greater specialisation during Key Stage 4.
- 3.4.3 These results are almost exactly the same as in the 2008 survey, and indicate that there has been no significant increase in practical learning in schools over the period.

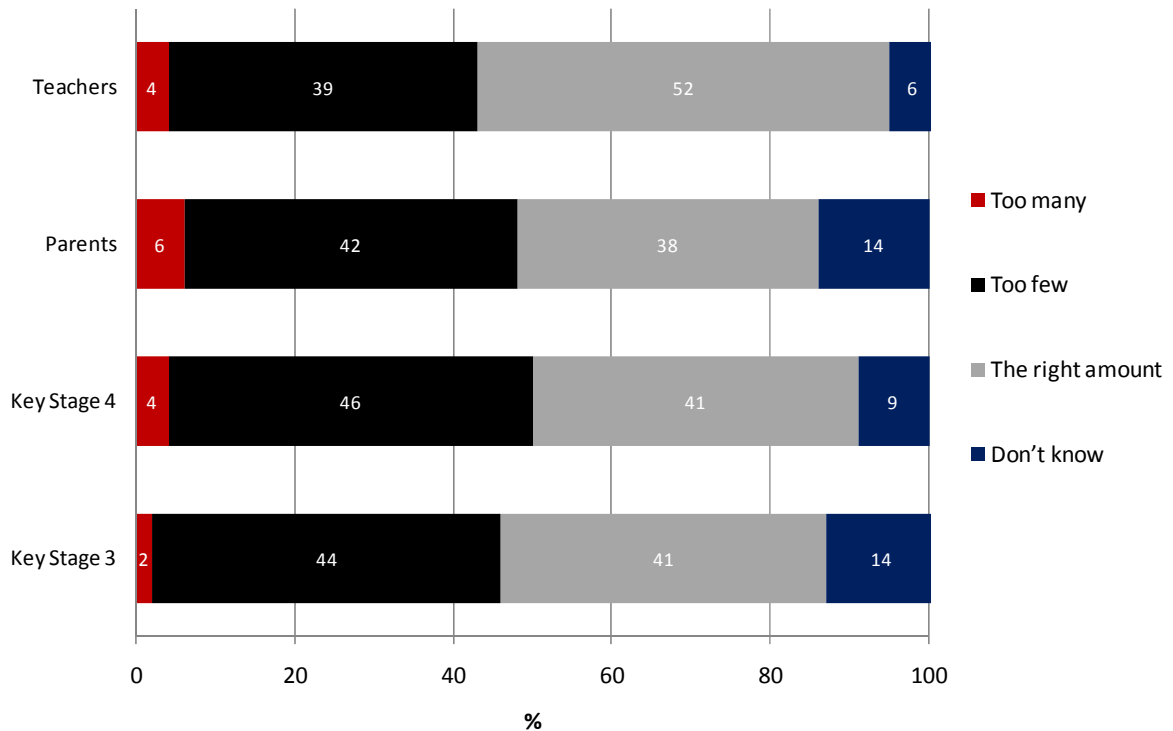
Figure 9: During your lessons at school are you ever involved in practical projects? Practical projects include things like enterprise competitions, organising events and making things.



Base: Key Stage 3 children (454), Key Stage 4 children (335)

- 3.4.4 Stakeholders were also asked if they thought the level of practical learning in schools is right. Teachers remained the group most likely to think the level correct, and their views had not changed significantly since last year. Over half (52 per cent) thought that schools have the right amount of practical projects, but a significant proportion (39 per cent) also thought the current level insufficient.
- 3.4.5 The views of parents were also largely similar to those expressed in 2008, although parents this year were slightly less likely say there are too few practical projects (42 per cent, compared with 48 per cent last year). However they were not significantly more likely to say that the level of practical learning is correct (38 per cent).
- 3.4.6 Children at Key Stage 3 remained roughly equally likely to think there are too few practical projects (44 per cent) and to think the level right (41 per cent). A significant proportion (14 per cent) of children at this stage said they did not know. These results show no significant change since 2008.
- 3.4.7 At Key Stage 4 however, children were somewhat less likely to think there are too few practical projects (46 per cent, compared with 55 per cent last year), and slightly more likely to think the level right (41 per cent, compared with 33 per cent last year). This is despite the fact that Key Stage 4 respondents reported the same level of involvement in practical projects as last year, as discussed above. While the level of involvement has not changed, it appears that satisfaction with it is slightly higher.
- 3.4.8 Overall, the results show significant proportions of all groups feeling that practical learning in schools is insufficient. While Key Stage 4 children seem slightly more satisfied than last year, they still feel on balance that there are not enough practical projects. The chart below shows that there continues to be demand, across all groups, for more practical learning.

Figure 10: Do you think schools have too many, not enough, or about the right amount of practical projects?



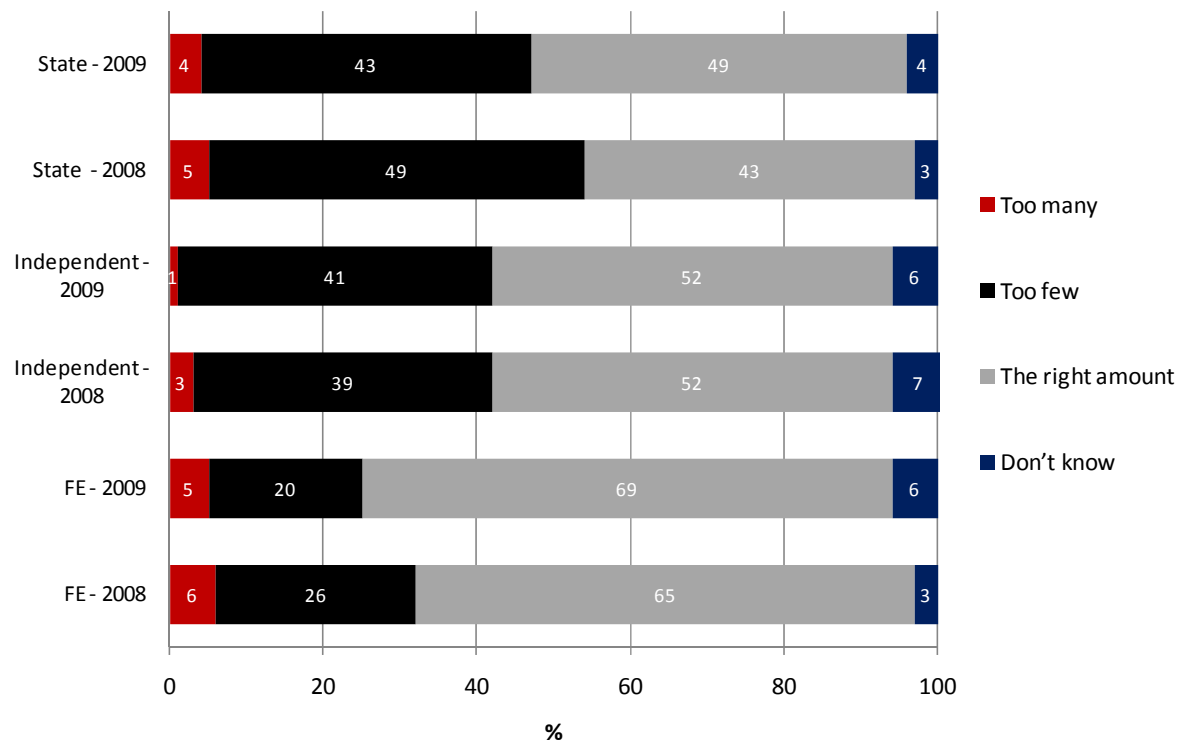
Base: KS3 children (454), KS4 children (335), parents (1,013), teachers/lecturers (1,034)

3.4.9 While there has been no overall change in the views of many stakeholder groups, no change at the overall level can mask developments among different groups in the samples. Last year there was a difference in views between teachers in state and independent schools, with those in independent schools more likely to think that the level of practical learning was right. This time there was no significant difference between the two school types. This change has been driven by teachers in state schools, who have become slightly more likely to say that the level is right (49 per cent, compared with 43 per cent last year) and slightly less likely to say there is too little practical learning (43 per cent compared with 49 per cent). Teachers in independent schools, who are more likely overall to believe the level is right, have not changed their opinion significantly.

3.4.10 The chart below shows the year-on-year variations among different institution types. While it appears that FE lecturers are less likely this year to say there is insufficient practical

learning, the change is not statistically significant so far. If a trend exists, this may become apparent in next year's wave of research.

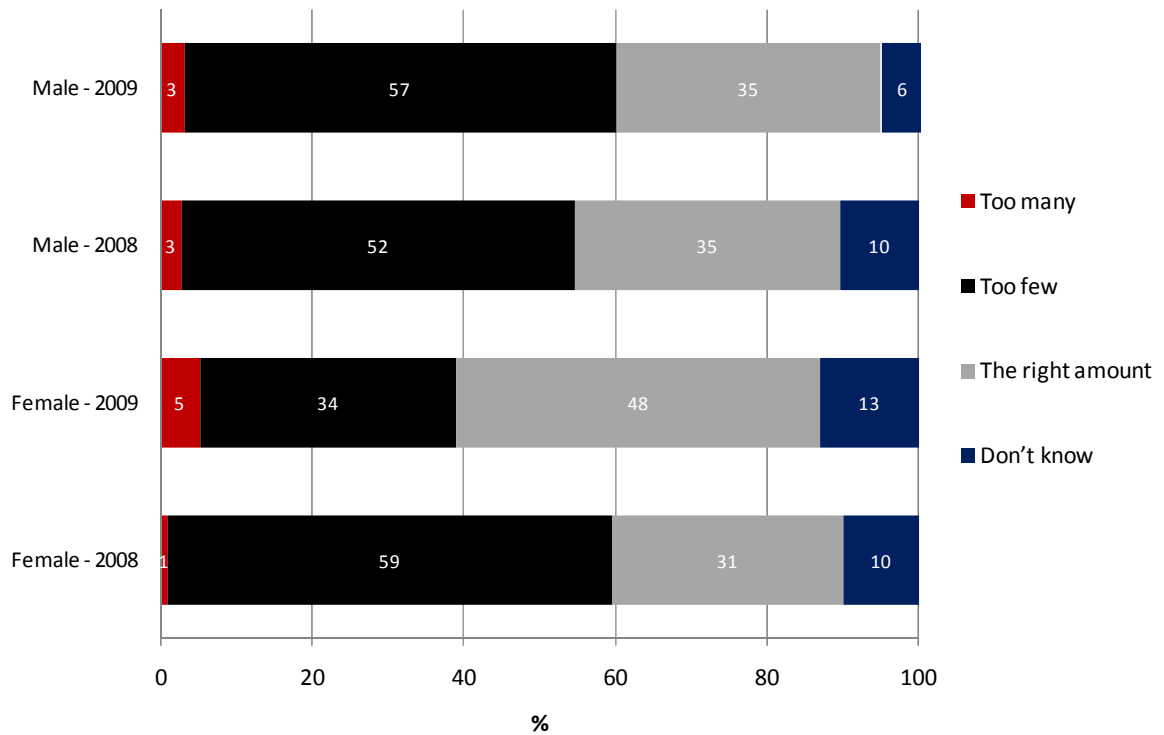
Figure 11: Do you think schools have too many, not enough, or about the right amount of practical projects? (by year and school/college type)



Base: state teachers (2009=712, 2008= 813), independent teachers (2009=105, 2008=116), FE lecturers (2009=131, 2008=213)

3.4.11 When looking at different subgroups, notable variations are also present in the results for children and young people. In 2008, girls and boys at Key Stage 4 had similar views with regards to the level of practical learning. This year, however, the opinion of girls has changed dramatically, while that of boys has not changed. The majority of girls (59 per cent) believed that there were too few practical projects in 2008; this figure has dropped to a third (34 per cent) this year. In line with this, the proportion saying the level is right has increased from 31 per cent in 2008 to 48 per cent this year. Clearly, the higher level of satisfaction at Key Stage 4, discussed earlier, is driven primarily by the view of girls. It may perhaps be that girls' needs are being met by Diplomas to a greater extent than those of boys. Certainly, the change shown in the chart below is considerable.

Figure 12: Do you think schools have too many, not enough, or about the right amount of practical projects? (Key Stage 4, by year and gender)



Base: KS4 boys (2009=177, 2008=154), KS4 girls (2009=158, 2008=222)

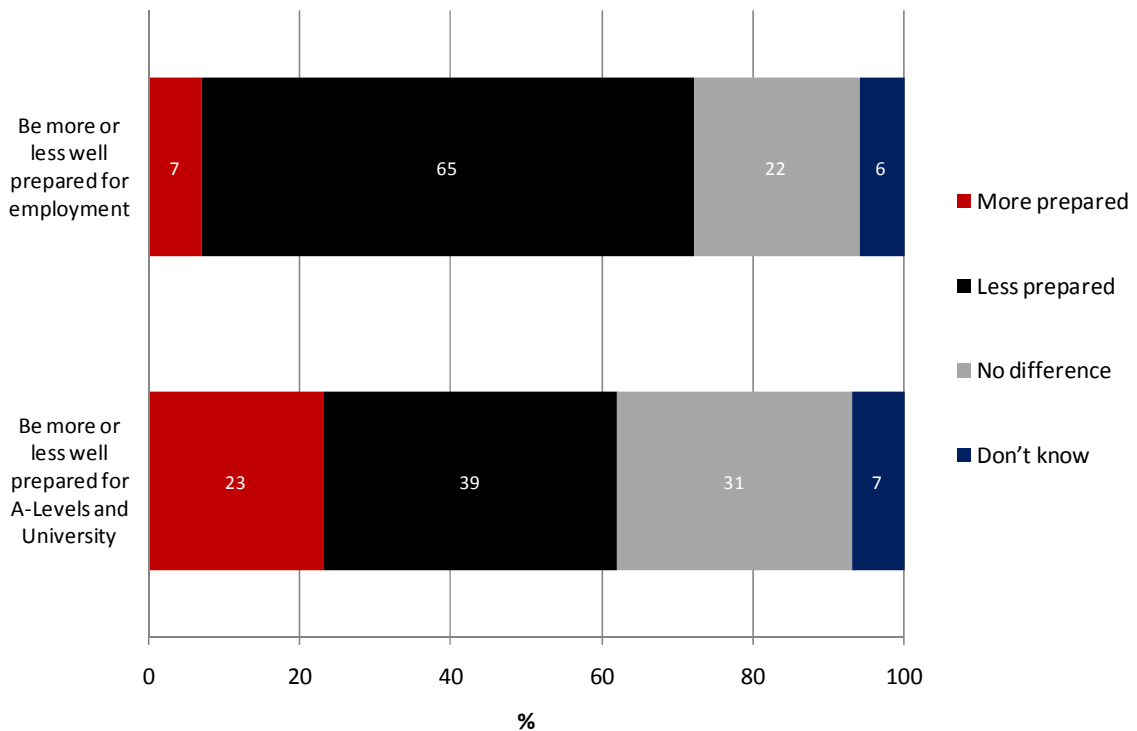
3.5 The consequences of reducing practical learning

- 3.5.1 A new section of questions was asked this year on the implications for young people if there was less practical learning in schools. This relates to the possibility that an incoming Conservative Government may provide less support for practical learning in the curriculum.

Teachers' perspective

- 3.5.2 Teachers were asked about the effect on students in general if there was less practical learning in schools and colleges. The consensus was that this would have a negative impact on young people's readiness for the workplace, with almost two-thirds (65 per cent) stating that students would be less well prepared for employment. Only seven per cent thought this would make students better prepared, while a fifth (22 per cent) thought it would make no difference. This reinforces the view that practical learning is seen as superior to academic learning with regards to developing certain employability skills.
- 3.5.3 When it comes to being ready for further study, however, the view is more mixed. Thirty-nine per cent of teachers said that students would be less well prepared for A-levels and university if there were less practical learning in schools, but almost a quarter (23 per cent) thought that they would be better prepared. The results show that a proportion of teachers see academic learning as the preferred route to further study and may perhaps see practical learning as taking time away from 'the basics' of education which they consider more important. Nevertheless, the view on balance was still that a reduction in practical learning would decrease young people's readiness for A-levels and university.

Figure 13: If there was LESS practical learning in schools/ colleges, do you think that pupils in general would...



Base: teachers/FE lecturers (1,034)

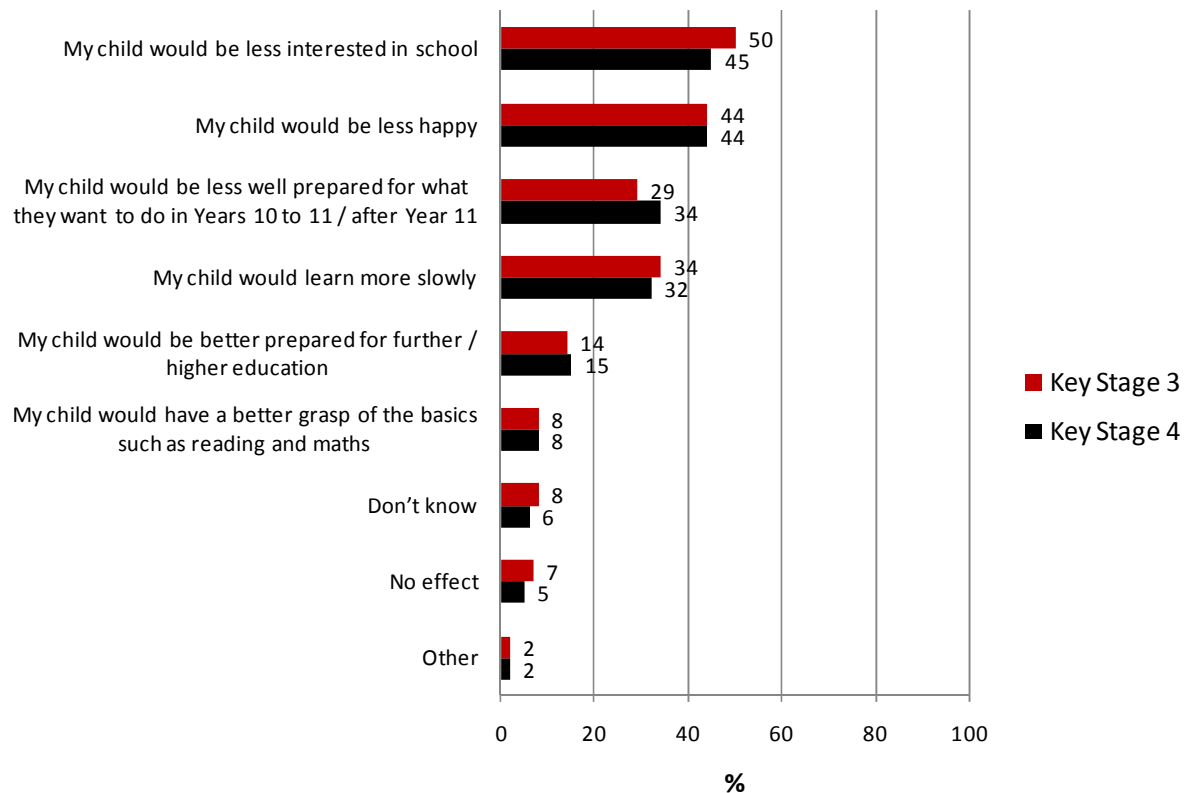
- 3.5.4 Teachers were also asked about the impact on young people's speed of learning and their level of interest in school. The results show that, aside from readiness for further study or the workplace, teachers see more general negative consequences if practical learning were reduced.
- 3.5.5 Over half (57 per cent) of teachers thought that students in general would be less interested in school if there was less practical learning. This is in line with results from children and young people, which show that many find practical learning methods more enjoyable. Only 16 per cent of teachers thought that students in general would be more interested in school, while a fifth (21 per cent) thought it would make no difference.
- 3.5.6 Similarly, almost half (47 per cent) of teachers said that students in general would learn and develop more slowly if there were less practical learning, while only one in ten thought they would learn faster. This was the category where teachers were least likely to think there

would be an impact at all: a third (33 per cent) thought it would make no difference. The results show that, while some teachers may prefer academic learning with regards to preparing for further study, they still see more general benefits of practical learning.

Parents' perspective

- 3.5.7 Parents were asked a slightly different question to teachers. They were first asked how their child prefers to learn, and those who said their child prefers to learn practically or prefers a mixture of practical and academic learning were then asked a follow-up question on the implications for this particular child if there were less practical learning in schools. Thus, these findings focus specifically on those children who like practical learning, rather than young people in general.
- 3.5.8 The question was asked separately for parents of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 children, although there were few differences between the two stages. The results show that some of the negative consequences identified by teachers are a concern for parents as well. Half of those with a child at Key Stage 3, and 45 per cent at Key Stage 4, thought that their child would be less happy if practical learning were reduced. Also in line with the teachers findings, around a third of parents thought their child would learn more slowly. Close to half the parents surveyed (44 per cent) said their child would be less happy.

Figure 14: You said that your child prefers to learn practically, or with a mix of academic and practical learning. If practical learning was not available and your child had to learn by purely academic methods, what effect, if any, do you think this would have? (by key stage)



Base: parents whose child prefers learning practically or prefers a mix (KS3=362, KS4=267)

3.5.9 Regarding preparation for the next stage, a third with a child at Key Stage 4 (34 per cent) and slightly less at Key Stage 3 (29 per cent) said their child would be less well prepared for Years 10 to 11 (if in Key Stage 3) or for the post-16 stage (if in Key Stage 4). Only eight per cent said that their child would have a better grasp of the basics such as reading and maths if there were less practical learning. However around one in seven said that their child would be better prepared for further/higher education, reflecting the view of some teachers that academic learning is a better preparation for university.

3.6 Teachers supporting practical learning

3.6.1 Teachers this year appear to be more positive about their capability to support practical learning. However, since the question asked was not identical (in 2008 the question was

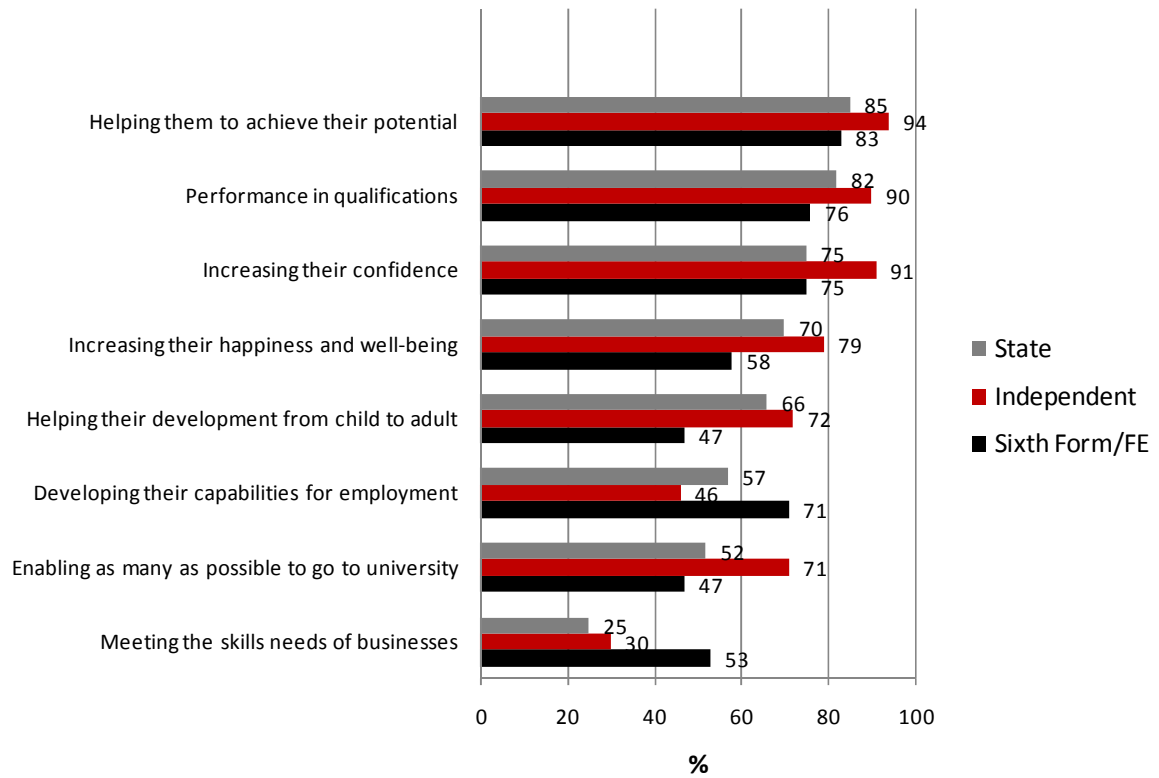
asked in a negative format, while in 2009 it was asked positively), any comparisons should be treated as indicative only. In 2008, 30 per cent disagreed that their training did NOT sufficiently equip them to support practical learning (therefore a positive opinion), while in 2009, 41 per cent agreed that their training equipped them in this way.

- 3.6.2 Views on the negative side showed less change. Forty-four per cent in 2008 agreed that their training did NOT sufficiently equip them to support practical learning, while this year 38 per cent disagreed that their training equipped them.
- 3.6.3 The results indicate an improvement in teachers' capability to support practical learning, but the different question construction makes direct comparison problematic. This is therefore an area which will be of interest in next year's wave, when it is to be hoped that a definite trend will become apparent.

3.7 Schools' priorities

- 3.7.1 The overall priorities of teachers and lecturers showed a very similar pattern to last year. The top priorities continued to be helping children achieve their potential (85 per cent), followed by performance in qualifications (80 per cent) and increasing confidence (77 per cent). None of these have varied significantly since last year.
- 3.7.2 Teachers in different institution types continued to have somewhat different priorities. Those in independent schools were more likely to select most options, but in particular were more concerned with increasing confidence, and happiness and well-being. They also remained significantly more concerned with enabling as many as possible to go to university (71 per cent compared with 52 per cent for state schools). This figure appears to suggest a decrease since 2008 when 79 per cent in independent schools ticked this option. In fact, it is not a significant difference, but it will be of interest to see whether a trend appears next year, by which time the recession may have impacted on priorities regarding university.
- 3.7.3 Despite the recession, the results do not show an increase in the proportion considering developing young people's capabilities for employment, or meeting the skills needs of businesses, to be priorities. Again, it will be interesting to see how this develops over time.

Figure 15: Thinking about your school/ college, which of the following are considered important for students at your school/ college? (by school/college type)



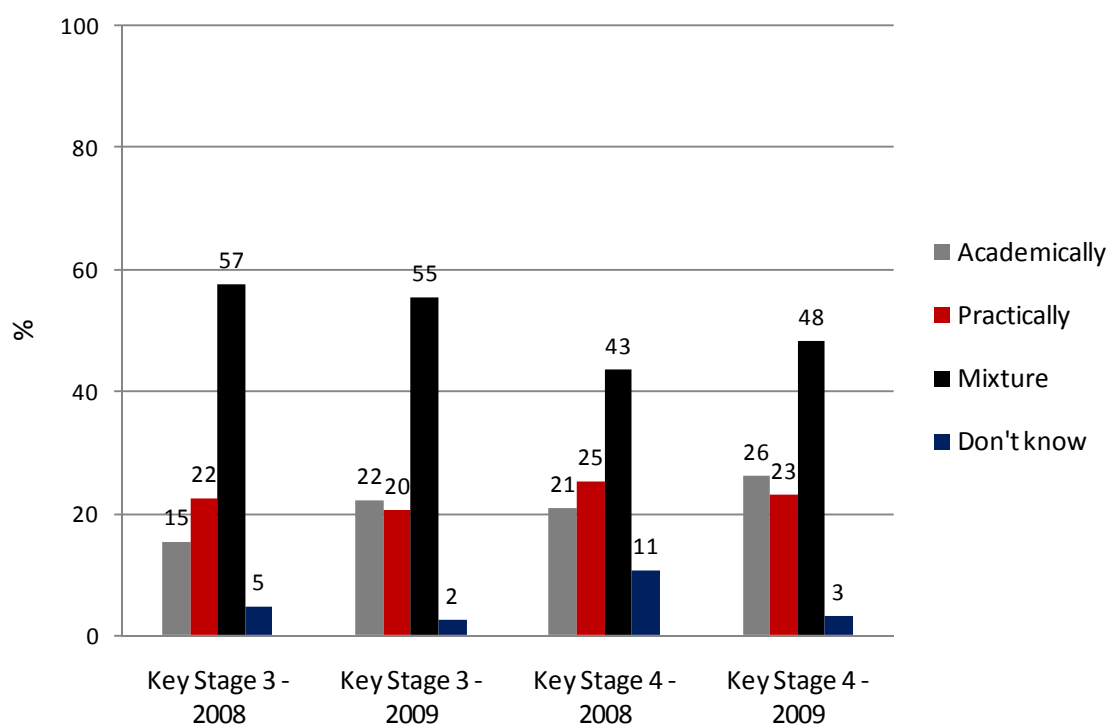
Base: state teachers (712), independent teachers (105), sixth form/ FE lecturers (131)

4 Attitudes to different types of learning

4.1 How people prefer to learn

- 4.1.1 A mixture of practical and academic learning remains the most popular option for parents with children at both key stages when asked how their child prefers to learn. Over half (55 per cent) with a child at Key Stage 3, and almost half (48 per cent) with a child at Key Stage 4 selected this option. However the results show some changes since the 2008 survey.
- 4.1.2 At Key Stage 3, the proportion saying their child prefers to learn academically has increased significantly from 15 per cent in 2008 to 22 per cent this year. However this has not been matched by a significant reduction in the proportion saying their child prefers to learn practically (rather, all the other options have decreased by small degrees).
- 4.1.3 At Key Stage 4 there has also been a slight increase in the proportion saying their child prefers to learn academically, from 21 per cent to 26 per cent, although this difference is not statistically significant. The proportion choosing a mixture of academic and practical learning has also increased slightly from 43 per cent to 48 per cent, while the proportion saying their child prefers to learn practically has remained fairly constant. While one in ten (11 per cent) at Key Stage 4 said they did not know how their child prefers to learn in 2008, this has reduced to only three per cent in 2009. The year on year variations are shown in the chart below.

Figure 16: How do you think this child prefers to learn?

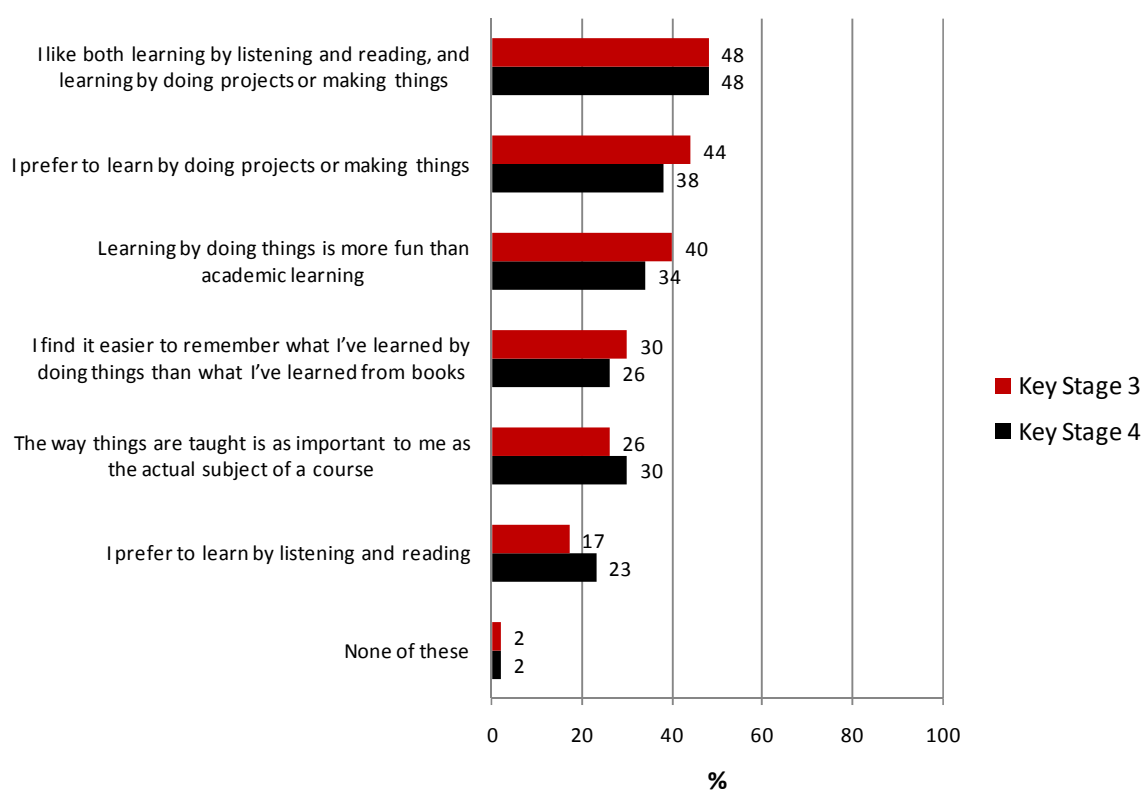


Base: parents with a child at KS3 (2009=479, 2008=392), parents with a child at KS4 (2009=377, 2008=359)

- 4.1.4 While there have been some shifts of opinion and there appears to be slightly more support for academic learning, the results from parents continue to show an overall preference for a mixture of learning types at both stages.
- 4.1.5 Children and young people also continued to support a mixture of academic and practical learning. As in 2008, children at both key stages were most likely to say that they liked *both learning by listening and reading, and learning by doing projects or making things*, with 48 per cent at both key stages selecting this. However options relating to practical learning remained significantly more popular than those relating to academic learning.
- 4.1.6 Forty-four per cent at Key Stage 3 and 38 per cent at Key Stage 4 said that they preferred to learn practically, while 40 per cent at Key Stage 3 and 34 per cent at Key Stage 4 said that practical learning is more fun than academic learning. There were no significant changes here since 2008.

4.1.7 The results continue to show a slight shift in preferences as children get older, with children at Key Stage 3 more likely to support practical learning than those at Key Stage 4. By contrast, by Key Stage 4 there is a slight increase in support for academic learning (23 per cent at Key Stage 4 compared with 17 per cent at Key Stage 3).

Figure 17: Thinking about how you prefer to learn, which of these statements do you agree with?

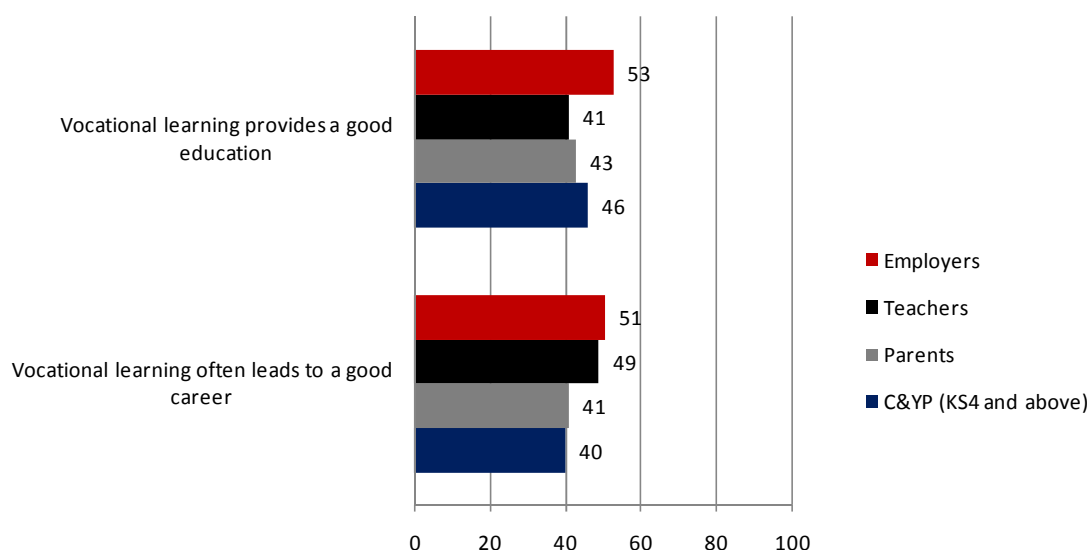


Base: KS3 children (454), KS4 children (335)

4.2 Perceptions of vocational qualifications

- 4.2.1 As might be expected given the fairly short timeframe, few very significant changes had taken place since 2008 in the core attitudes regarding vocational qualifications.
- 4.2.2 Stakeholders continued to agree on balance that vocational learning provides a good education and often leads to a good career. All four groups recorded highly positive net agreement scores for these statements. Employers continued to be the most positive group, showing no significant change since 2008, however there were some small-scale changes among other groups.
- 4.2.3 Teachers have become slightly less positive on vocational learning providing a good education. This year, the net agreement score for teachers was 41, compared with 46 in 2008. However they remained equally likely to think that vocational learning often leads to a good career.
- 4.2.4 By contrast, children and young people have become slightly more likely to think vocational learning provides a good education (net score of 46, compared with 41 in 2008). However their views on whether it leads to a good career have not changed significantly. Parents' views had not changed on either measure.
- 4.2.5 Despite these small variations, the overall picture is very positive, both about the quality of education provided by vocational learning, and about the career prospects.

Figure 18: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (net agreement score)

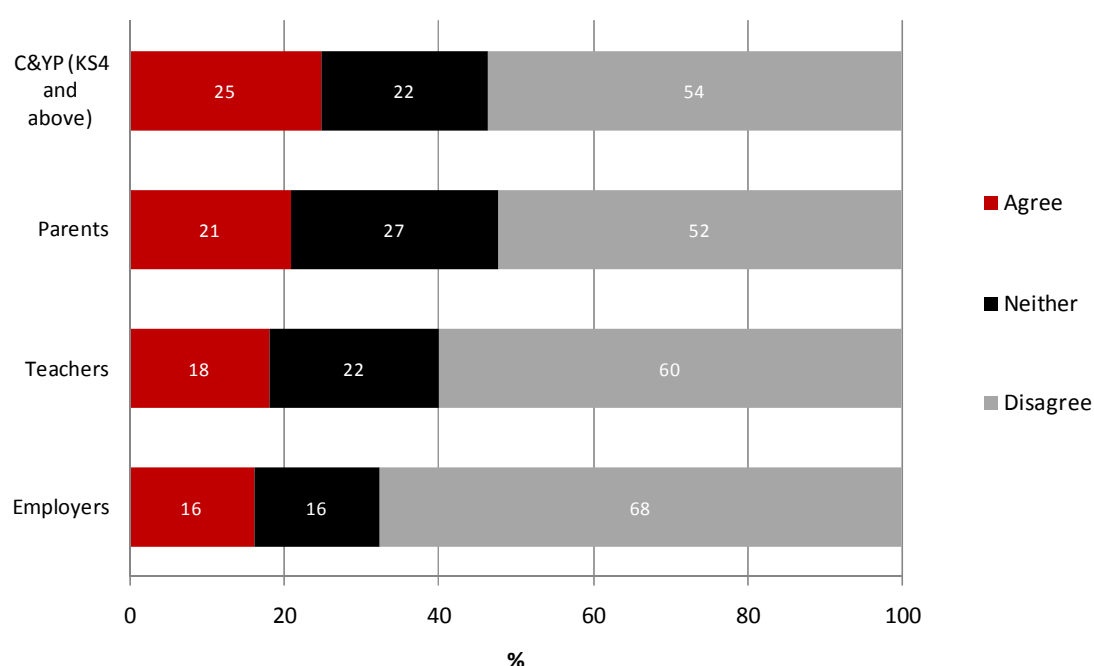


Base: young people at KS4 and above (1,710), parents (1,013), teachers/lecturers (1,034), employers (1,001)

- 4.2.6 As in 2008, stakeholders did not believe on balance that vocational learning is only for those who do not do well at school. Only between one in seven and a quarter agreed with this statement, with a much greater proportion disagreeing in each case. Employers and teachers remained the most positive about vocational learning in this respect, and parents and children and young people the least.
- 4.2.7 Compared with last year, children and young people were slightly more likely to agree that vocational learning is only for those who do not do well at school, (25 per cent compared with 21 per cent), but also slightly more likely to disagree (54 per cent compared with 50 per cent). The proportion expressing no opinion either way has gone down from 29 per cent to 22 per cent, suggesting that young people may now be slightly better informed about vocational learning opportunities.
- 4.2.8 The views of parents and teachers have not changed significantly. However the opinions of employers have become somewhat more positive towards vocational qualifications. While the proportion agreeing that vocational learning is only for those who don't do well at school

remained constant at 16 per cent, 68 per cent disagreed with the statement compared with only 58 per cent last year.

Figure 19: “Vocational learning is only for those who do not do well at school”



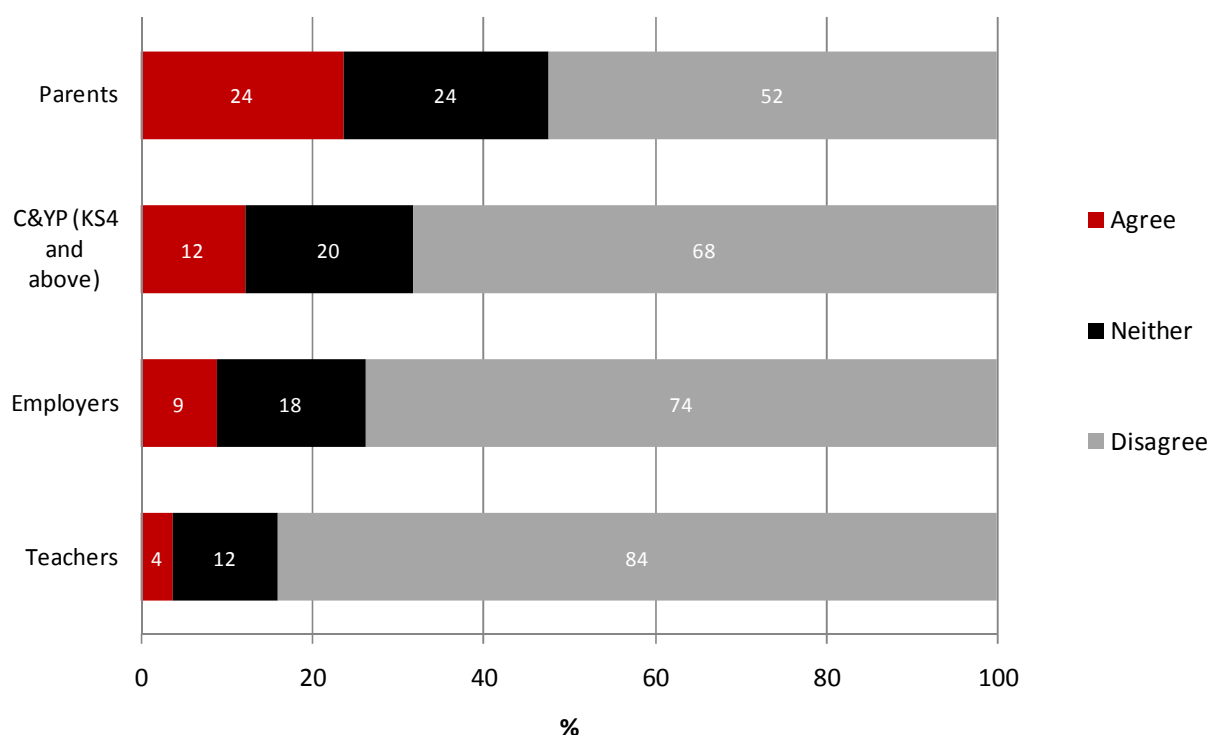
Base: young people at KS4 and above (1,582), parents (965), teachers/lecturers (1,016), employers (974) – figures exclude ‘don’t know’

- 4.2.9 Stakeholders continued to emphatically disagree overall that young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university, but there were considerable differences between the different groups, and small-scale changes since last year.
- 4.2.10 Teachers remain the group least likely to believe that university was essential for young people to fulfil their potential, and in fact were slightly less likely to hold this view than in 2008. Eighty-four per cent disagreed with the statement, compared with 80 per cent last year. The small proportion agreeing that university is the only route had not changed (four per cent).
- 4.2.11 Employers also showed a slight shift in favour of vocational routes. Seventy-four per cent disagreed that young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university, a slight

increase on 2008 (69 per cent). Nine per cent agreed with the statement, which shows no significant change since last year. Similarly, children and young people have become slightly more likely to disagree with the statement (68 per cent, compared with 62 per cent last year), while no more likely to agree

4.2.12 Parents remain the group most likely to believe that university is the only acceptable route for young people, and were the only group that showed no significant change since the 2008 research. A quarter (24 per cent) of parents agreed that university is the only acceptable route for young people, while 52 per cent disagreed.

Figure 20: “Young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university”



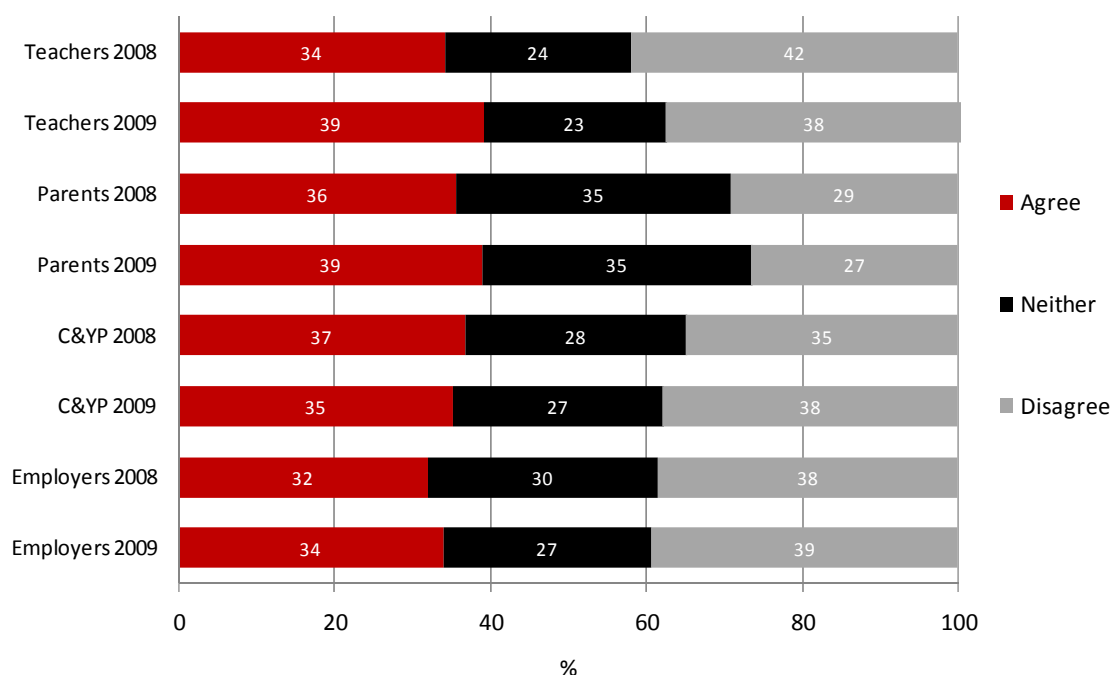
Base: young people at KS4 and above (1,598), parents (985), teachers/lecturers (1,015), employers (985) – figures exclude ‘don’t know’

4.2.13 The results suggest that parents’ views may be more entrenched than those of other groups. Teachers and young people naturally come into contact with vocational routes through schools and colleges, even if not directly involved with them, while employers may encounter people who have taken such qualifications in the course of recruitment. By

contrast, parents are perhaps less exposed to different learning routes, and therefore may have had less opportunity to see the benefits of vocational qualifications. This may explain why they remain the most likely to believe that university is the only good route for young people.

- 4.2.14 The results show a continuing concern among some groups that, despite vocational learning providing a good education and often leading to a good career, it also may rule out university as a later option. Around a third of young people and employers, and slightly more parents and teachers, agreed with this statement.
- 4.2.15 There have been few changes in the proportions holding this view. However, teachers have become slightly more likely to agree (39 per cent compared with 34 per cent in 2008) and less likely to disagree (38 per cent compared with 42 per cent in 2008). This indicates a small shift in teachers' perceptions which could be a cause for concern. Children and young people are slightly more likely to disagree with the statement this year and indicatively less likely to agree, although the differences are minimal.
- 4.2.16 Significant proportions of around a quarter to around a third of each group continue to express no opinion either way on this issue, suggesting that many people do not have a clear understanding of the progression route from vocational qualifications or the possible impact on future learning options. Teachers, as might be expected, are the group most likely to have an opinion either way, but still almost a quarter (23 per cent) did not express an opinion. Among parents, who are likely to influence young people's decisions, this figure was more than a third (35 per cent).

Figure 21: “Taking a vocational qualification route might rule out university as an option”



Base: young people at KS4 and above (1,487), parents (913), teachers/lecturers (990), employers (960) – figures exclude ‘don’t know’

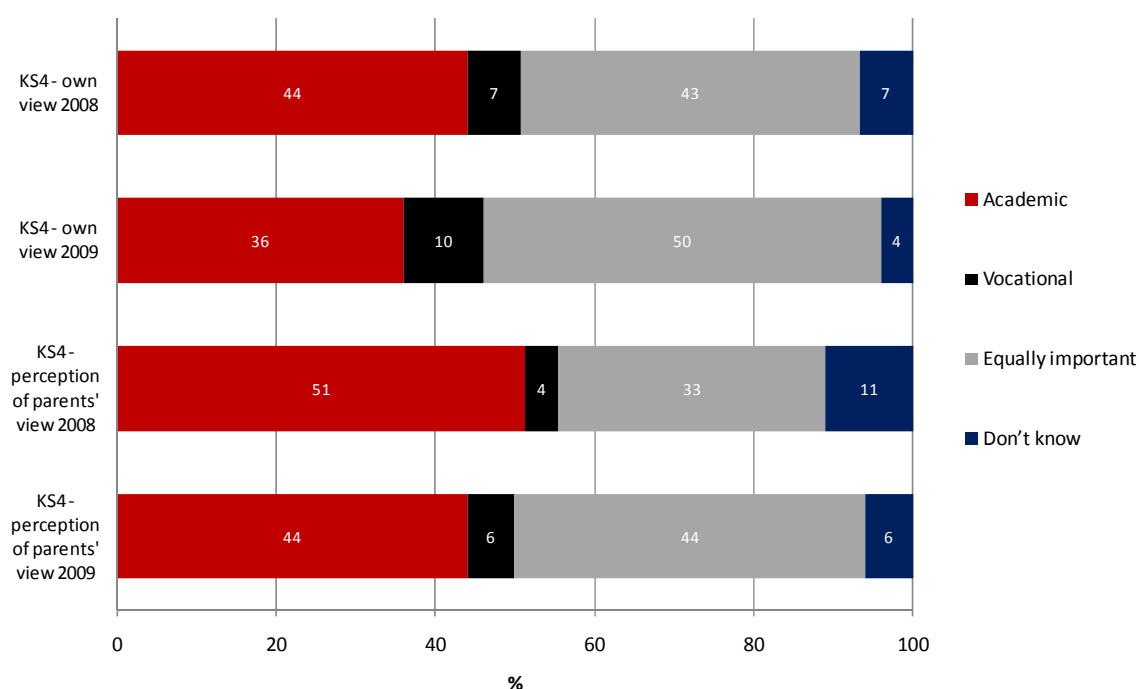
4.3 Relative importance of academic and vocational qualifications

Children and young people’s perspective

- 4.3.1 There is a continuing belief among many children and young people that academic qualifications are more important than vocational ones. There is also a variation between what young people believe themselves and what they think their parents believe. However, this section shows some important developments since the 2008 research.
- 4.3.2 At Key Stage 4, young people have become significantly less likely to see academic qualifications as more important and correspondingly more likely to see the two types as equally important. This year, only 36 per cent said that academic qualifications were more important, compared with 44 per cent in 2008. The proportion believing both types to be equally important has increased to half, from 43 per cent last year.

- 4.3.3 When it comes to young people's perceptions of what their parents think, there has also been some change at Key Stage 4. Last year, half (51 per cent) believed their parents considered academic qualifications more important, with only a third believing that their parents saw both types as equally important. This year, the two results are balanced, with 44 per cent thinking their parents prefer academic qualifications, and 44 per cent thinking that their parents consider both types equally important.
- 4.3.4 This is a significant shift of opinion. However it is unclear how far this suggests that parents views may actually have changed, and how far it is the result of young people's opinions shifting. If young people have themselves become more favourable towards vocational qualifications, they may assume that their parents have also become more favourable, even if this is not the case in reality. Results from elsewhere in the study do not indicate a large change of opinion on the part of parents.

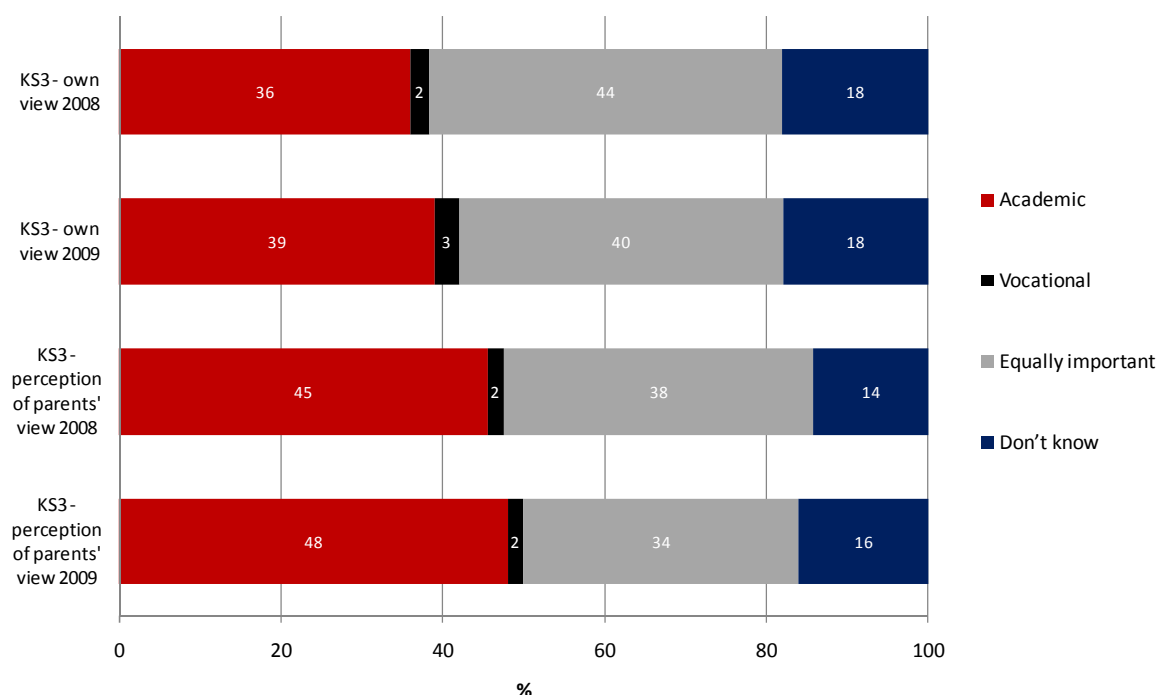
Figure 22: What do you think / what do you think your PARENTS believe is more important, academic qualifications or vocational qualifications? (Key Stage 4)



Base: KS4 children (2009=335, 2008=376)

- 4.3.5 At Key Stage 3, by contrast, there has not been a significant change of opinion. Children were indicatively more likely to consider academic qualifications more important (39 per cent compared with 36 per cent last year), and less likely to consider both types equally important (40 per cent compared with 44 per cent last year), however these variations are not statistically significant. Whatever the factors that have positively affected the view of Key Stage 4 children, they have not influenced younger children, at least so far.
- 4.3.6 When considering their parents' views, the results are similar. There have been small, but not statistically significant, shifts in favour of academic qualifications (48 per cent compared with 45 per cent last year) and away from both qualifications types being equally important (34 per cent compared with 38 per cent last year). As with Key Stage 4, the pattern of perceptions of parents' views mirrors the pattern of children's own views, and is likely to be driven by these to some extent.

Figure 23: What do you think / what do you think your PARENTS believe is more important, academic qualifications or vocational qualifications? (Key Stage 3)



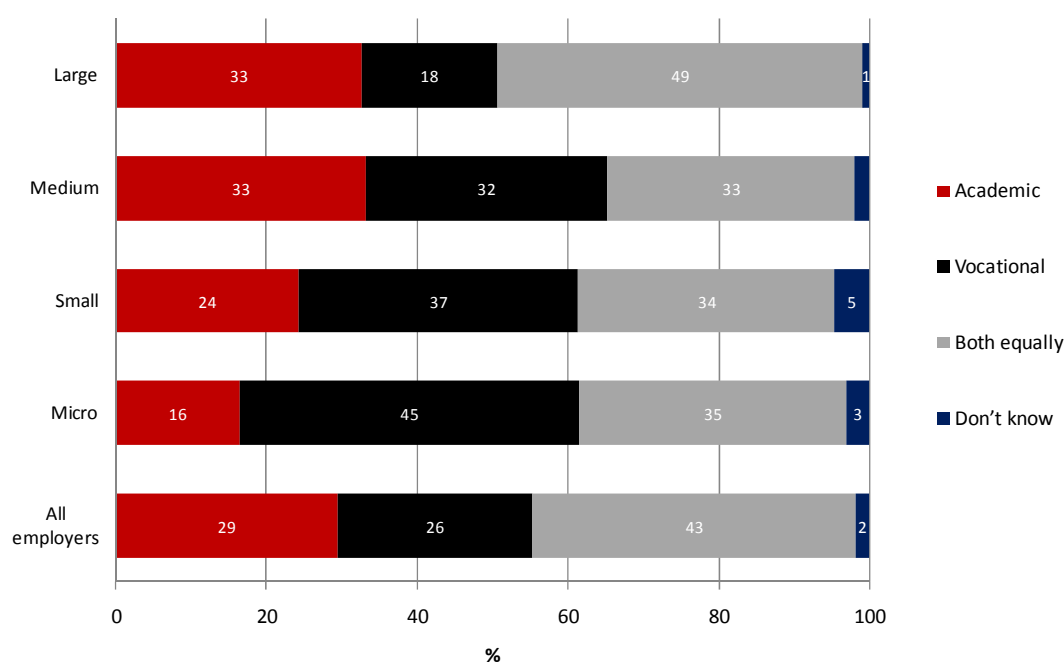
Base: KS3 children (2009=454, 2008=565)

- 4.3.7 It is also of interest to compare the two age groups. In 2008, Key Stage 4 children were more likely to think academic qualifications more important than were those in Key Stage 3, however this year the two groups are similarly likely to hold this view (36 per cent at Key Stage 4 and 39 per cent at Key Stage 3). Conversely, similar proportions of both believed both types of qualification to be equally important last year, while this year children in Key Stage 4 are more likely (50 per cent) to have this balanced view than are those in Key Stage 3 (40 per cent).

Employers' perspective

- 4.3.8 Employers continued to have a balanced view of different qualification types, with little change since last year's research.
- 4.3.9 Overall, employers were most likely to see both academic and vocational qualifications as equally relevant to their organisation (44 per cent). Among those who did not hold this view, there was close to an even balance between vocational (26 per cent) and academic (29 per cent) qualifications. These results show no significant change since last year.
- 4.3.10 As in 2008, support for vocational qualifications is strongest among smaller businesses and declines as business size increases. Micro businesses are strongly in favour of vocational qualifications (45 per cent), while over a third (37 per cent) of small businesses and just under a third (32 per cent) of medium businesses prefer vocational qualifications. This declines to only 18 per cent for large organisations.
- 4.3.11 By contrast, only 16 per cent of employers in micro businesses prefer academic qualifications; this increases to a quarter (24 per cent) of small businesses and a third (33 per cent) of medium and large organisations. Employers in large organisations are the most likely to believe both types of qualification to be equally important (49 per cent).
- 4.3.12 None of the groups show a definite change since last year. However medium organisations appear to have shifted slightly in favour of vocational qualifications. They are indicatively less likely to have a balanced view between the two qualification types (33 per cent compared with 42 per cent in 2008), and more likely to favour vocational qualifications (32 per cent compared with 27 per cent). Due to the relatively small sample sizes, these changes are not statistically significant, but if there is a genuine trend, this may emerge in next year's research.

Figure 24: Overall would you say that vocational qualifications or academic qualifications such as degrees are more useful and relevant to your organisation?



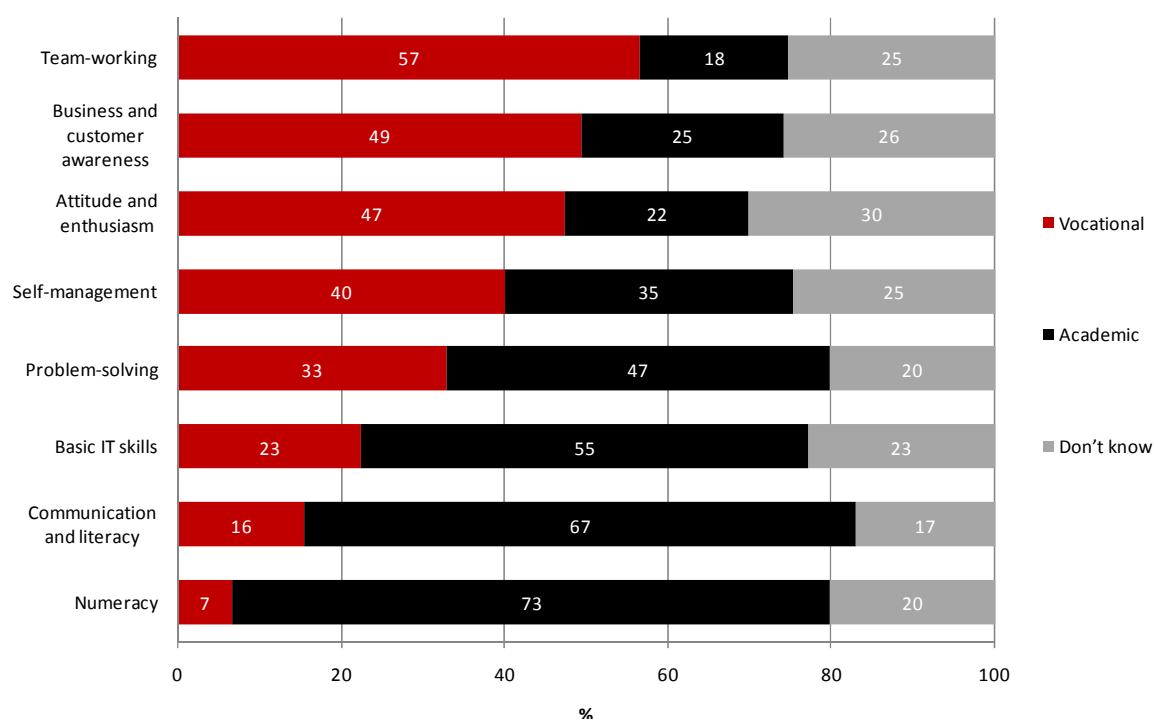
Base: all employers (1,001), micro (229), small (190), medium (162), large (418)

4.4 Which type of qualification leads to better skills

- 4.4.1 Employers continue to see vocational qualifications as better for developing many soft skills. Over half (57 per cent) thought that vocational qualifications lead to better team working skills, half (49 per cent) said they are better at developing business and customer awareness, and 47 per cent said they lead to better attitude and enthusiasm.
- 4.4.2 However, academic qualifications were emphatically preferred for developing more specific or basic skills, such as numeracy (73 per cent), communication and literacy (67 per cent) and basic IT skills (55 per cent). Problem solving and self-management were closer to being balanced between the two qualification types.
- 4.4.3 These results show very few changes since the 2008 survey. The proportion thinking vocational qualifications are better at developing business and customer awareness has decreased slightly from 54 per cent in 2008 to 49 per cent this year. However this is a very minor change and on its own does not seem to indicate a problem.

4.4.4 There were some small variations between different organisation sizes. For example, smaller organisations (who, as discussed above, consider vocational qualifications more relevant to their needs) were more likely to think vocational qualifications better at developing self-management (49 per cent of micro and 45 per cent of small businesses, compared with 36 per cent of large organisations). Smaller organisations were also more likely to prefer vocational qualifications for developing problem solving. However, all business sizes were in broad agreement with regards to academic qualifications being better for basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and IT.

Figure 25: Based on your experience of new employees, are those with academic qualifications or those with vocational qualifications better developed in terms of the following skills and attributes?



Base: all employers (1,001)

4.5 What type of people suit different qualifications

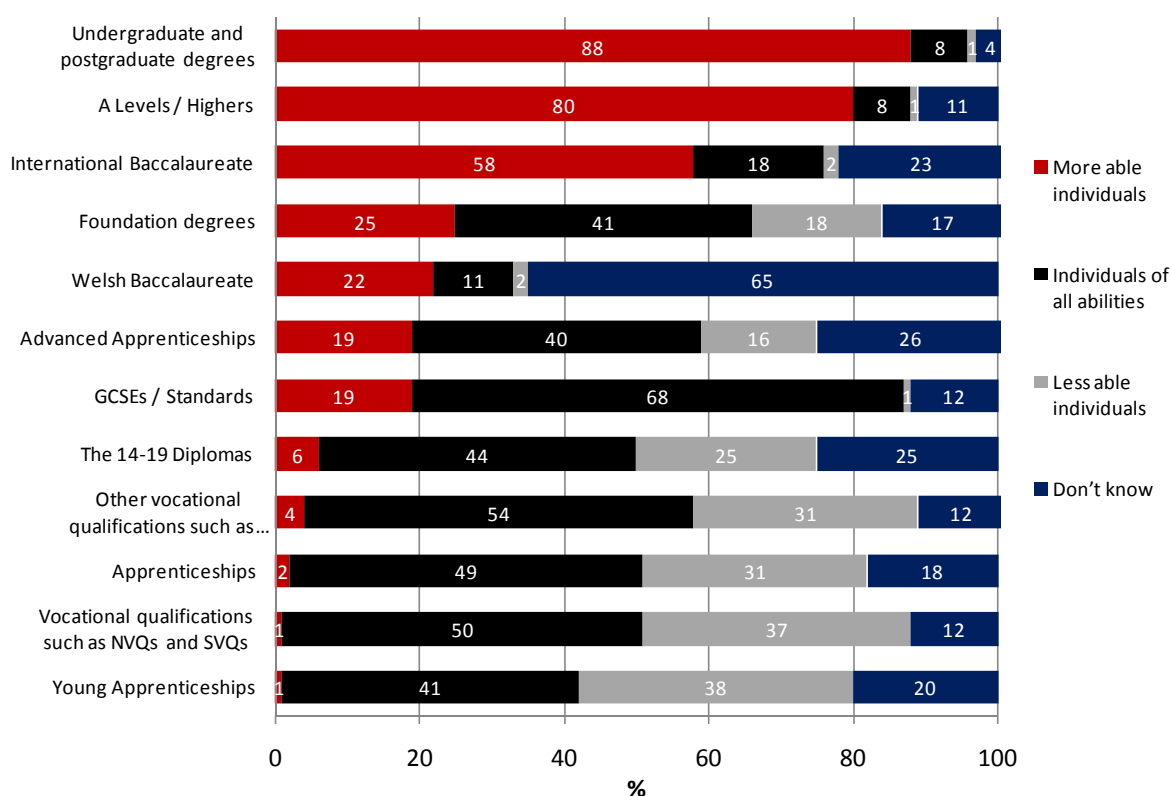
4.5.1 There is a continuing perception among some teachers that vocational qualifications are mainly suited to less able individuals. More than a third (37 per cent) thought that vocational qualifications such as NVQs and SVQs were most suited to less able individuals, although half thought them suitable for individuals of all abilities. For other vocational qualifications

such as BTECS and City and Guilds the perception was slightly better but still almost a third (31 per cent) thought these most suited to less able individuals, with 54 per cent thinking them suitable for everyone. Similarly, 31 per cent thought Apprenticeships most suited to less able individuals, and half (49 per cent) thought them suited to individuals of all abilities.

- 4.5.2 These results show no significant changes since last year. In particular, although take-up of Apprenticeships has increased, teacher perceptions of them have not improved. While large proportions of teachers consider vocational routes to be suitable for individuals of all abilities, the proportions that see them as suitable for less able individuals are significant. This may affect the advice teachers give to young people.
- 4.5.3 These perceptions are also affected by the age of the teacher, with younger teachers seeming to have a less positive view of vocational routes. Among teachers aged under 34, 45 per cent thought vocational qualifications such as NVQs and SVQs suited to less able individuals, while 39 per cent thought them suitable for individuals of all abilities. By contrast, the majority (60 per cent) of teachers aged over 55 thought these qualifications suitable for individuals of all abilities, with only 32 per cent saying they are most suited to less able individuals. This could result from older teachers' greater experience, which means they are likely to be better informed about all qualifications than younger teachers.
- 4.5.4 By contrast with vocational qualifications, over two-thirds (68 per cent) thought GCSEs suitable for individuals of all abilities, with hardly any saying they are best suited to less able individuals, and 19 per cent that they are best suited to more able individuals. The vast majority (78 per cent) saw A-levels as suited to more able individuals, with nine per cent thinking them suitable for everyone.
- 4.5.5 Awareness of Diplomas appears to have increased slightly, with the proportion expressing no opinion decreasing slightly to 25 per cent from 29 per cent last year. However awareness of this qualification remains relatively low. Aside from slightly greater awareness, the view of Diplomas does not appear to have changed since 2008.
- 4.5.6 The only qualification to show a substantial change since last year is the International Baccalaureate. The proportion thinking this qualification is suitable for more able individuals has increased from 48 per cent in 2008 to 58 per cent this year. This is largely driven by a reduction in those choosing 'don't know', rather than any of the other categories. This

suggests that teachers have become better informed about the International Baccalaureate (IB), and where this has happened they are most likely to have formed the opinion that the IB is a challenging qualification.

Figure 26: Thinking about the suitability of qualifications for individuals of different abilities, how would you describe each of the following...?



Base: all teachers/lecturers (1,034)

5 Making your mind up

5.1 What options are available

- 5.1.1 All those in Key Stage 3 or S2 in Scotland were asked what options they thought were available at their school or college for study at Key Stage 4. Awareness of GCSEs (Standards) is very high, at 90 per cent amongst 11-12s and 95 percent of 13-14s. In comparison only 14 per cent of those at Key Stage 3 were aware of vocational qualifications being available as an option at their school. This is consistent with 2008 both overall and in that boys and the older year group are most likely to be aware.
- 5.1.2 Awareness of 14-19 Diplomas was also consistent with 2008 at 12 per cent and again the older year group were more aware (16 per cent) as were girls rather than boys. There is also some indication that those whose parents are ABC1 based on socio-economic classification, were more likely to be aware of Diplomas than C2DEs, amongst whom awareness of vocational qualifications was slightly greater.

5.2 What are pupils thinking of doing after Years 9 and 11?

- 5.2.1 When thinking about what they might do at Key Stage 4, the findings were consistent with 2008 in that nine out of ten believed that they would be doing GCSEs (Standards) with just five per cent considering a 14-19 Diploma and a similar proportion thinking about vocational qualifications in one form or another. Eleven per cent of 11-12s and seven percent of 13-14s stated that they did not know at this stage what they will do.
- 5.2.2 Those already at Key Stage 4 were asked what they intended to do at age 16. As in 2008, the most frequently mentioned option was A-levels (Highers), selected by 68 per cent of those surveyed. Notably girls at 71 per cent were more likely than boys (66 per cent) to do so. A sizeable minority (ten per cent) were unsure whilst six per cent selected vocational qualifications such as NVQs and five percent (nine per cent of boys) suggested that they planned to take an Apprenticeship.

5.2.3 The reasons why pupils would consider options other than GCSEs or A-levels vary quite considerably between Key Stages 3 and 4. For the younger pupils there is a connection with problem solving, teamwork and 'learning by doing'. For the older age group it has become more closely related to getting the job they want and because by that stage at school they believe that they struggle with academic subjects and so do not want to continue down that pathway.

Figure 27 : Main reasons for thinking about doing vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 and 16+

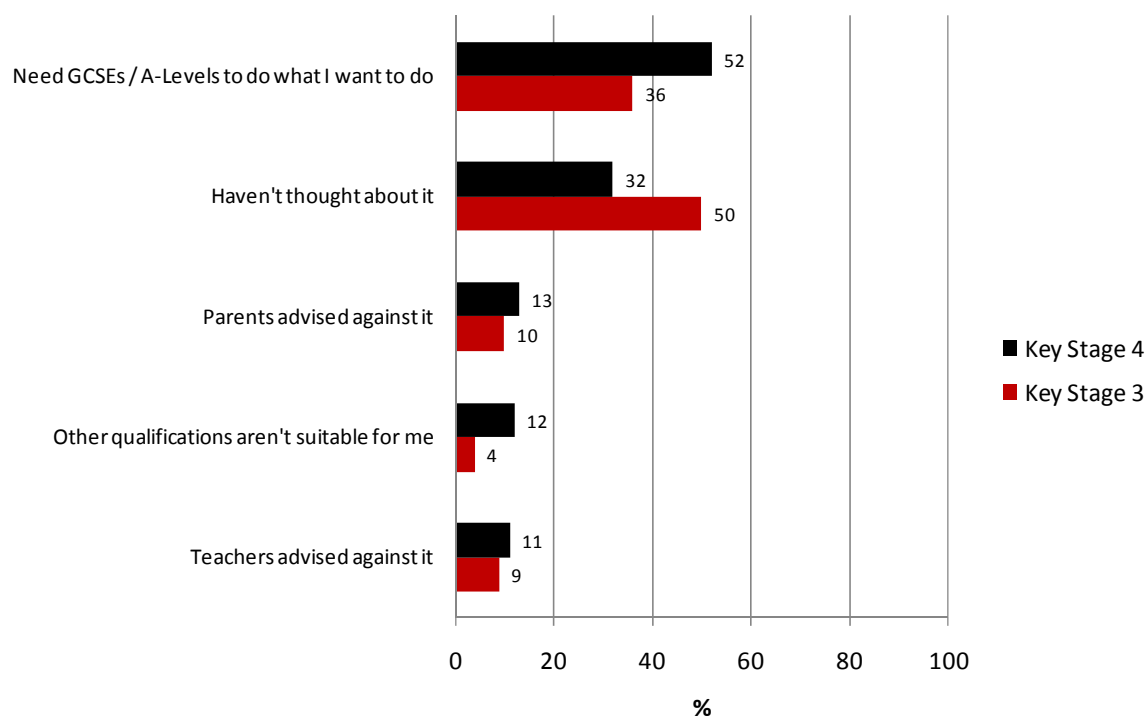
	Key Stage 3 (%)	Key Stage 4 (%)
I've more chance of getting a job that I like / want with vocational qualifications	40	56
I enjoy learning by doing	62	54
I struggle with academic subjects	19	34
I think practical skills are more important than academic skills	34	31
I want to become an apprentice after I leave school	20	30
I'm good at things like problem solving and teamwork	34	17
Don't know	12	4
Other reason	6	2
<i>Base</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>58</i>

5.2.4 For half of those at Key Stage 3 who believe they will do GCSEs (Standards), the option of doing something else is not one they have ever thought about. There is an indication that girls are more likely than boys to have considered other options, and less likely to state they do not know. Few admit to any great degree of influence from parents or teachers, and the extent to which pupils have thought about their options increases between the two key stages. Despite this, in the chart below, a third at Key Stage 4 say that they have never really thought about non-academic options.

5.2.5 Those in Key Stage 3 with parents from the socio-economic groups ABC1 are however more likely than C2DEs to have been advised by their parents against vocational qualifications and this is also true of their teachers. At Key Stage 3, there were few differences between the socio-economic sub-groups on whether pupils felt that they

needed academic qualifications, but at Key Stage 4 59 per cent of ABC1s stated that they needed to follow that pathway, compared with 43 per cent of C2DEs.

Figure 28: For which of the following reasons do you think you would not do anything different to GCSEs / A-levels?

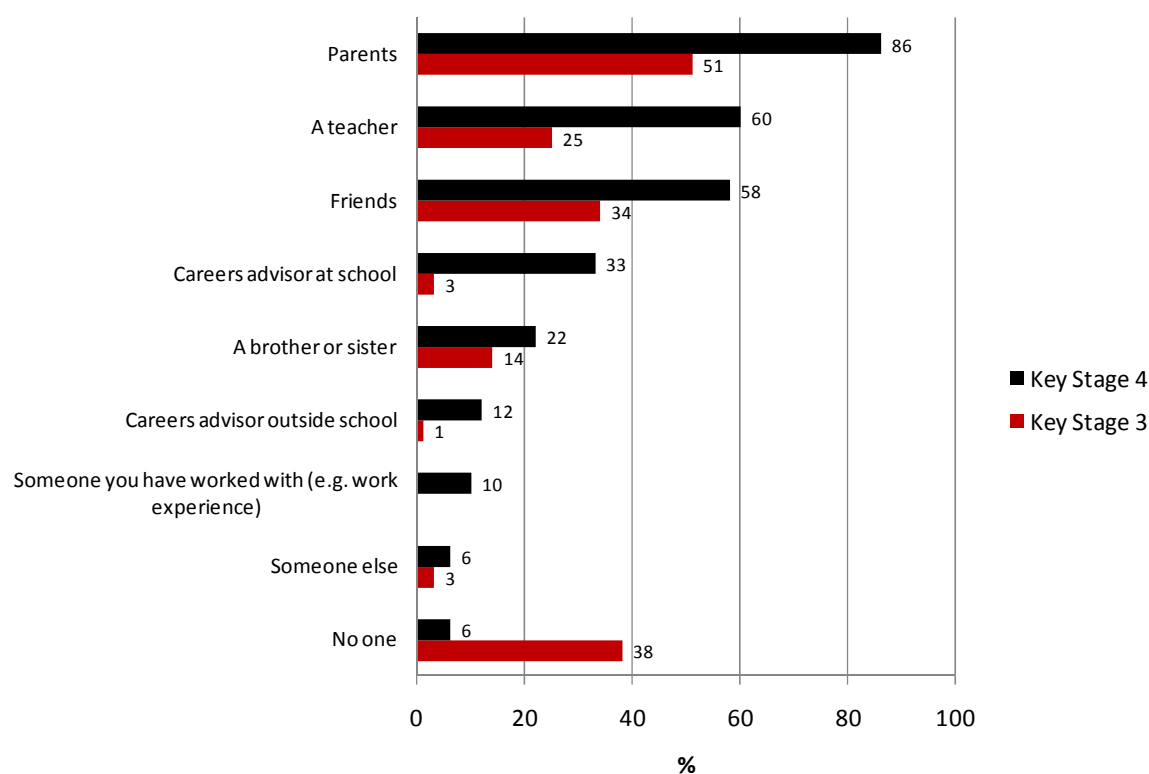


Base: young people who would not do anything different to GCSEs /A-levels (KS3=345, KS4=231)

5.3 Discussing options at Years 9 and 11

5.3.1 Although the influence of parents and teachers is not prominent in the chart above, evidence elsewhere in the survey suggests that young people do consult their parents before reaching decisions at the end of Year 9 (S2). Over half of Key Stage 3 pupils surveyed consulted their parents (see chart below). Girls are far more likely than boys to admit that they have gathered advice from others. Fifty-seven percent of girls say they have spoken to their parents, compared with 45 per cent of boys. Similarly, there was evidence that girls were more likely to have discussed their options with their friends.

Figure 29: Who, if anyone have you spoken to about your options after year 9 / 11?



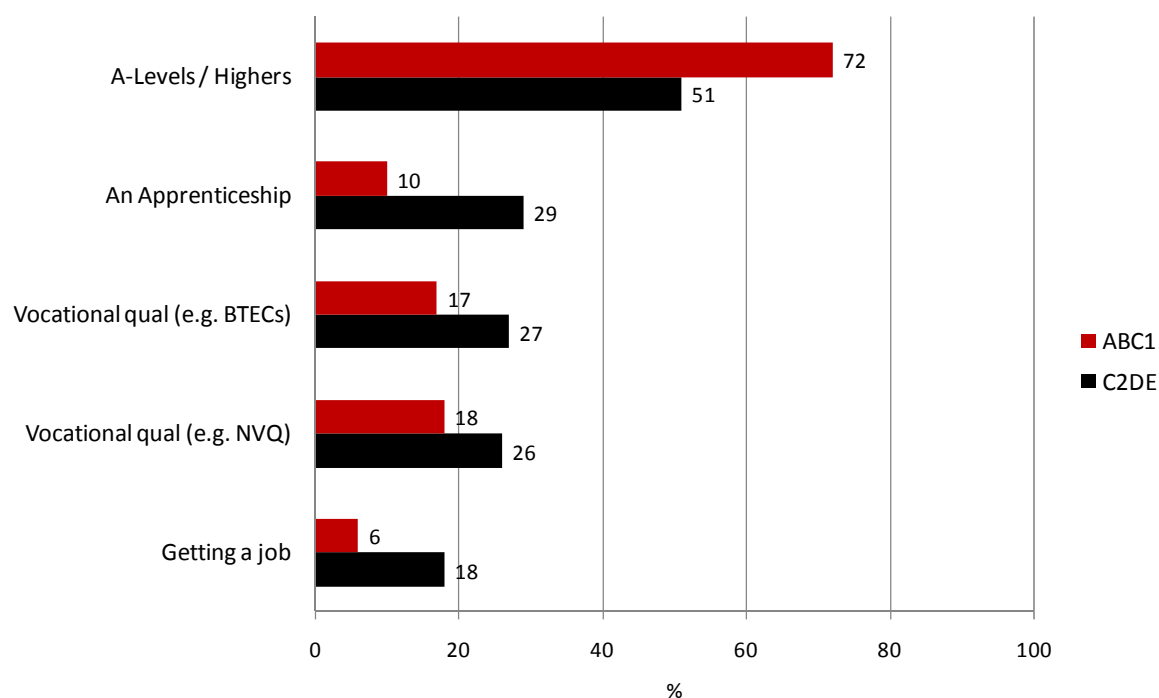
Base: Key Stage 3 children (454), Key Stage 4 children (335)

- 5.3.2 In comparing pupils at the two stages, there are clear differences, particularly in the high proportion of those at Key Stage 3 who have not spoken to anyone (38 per cent) which falls to just six per cent by Key Stage 4. The role of careers advisors was mentioned by a third of those at Key Stage 4, while significantly higher numbers have consulted their parents, teachers and friends. Among the older age group, girls were again more likely to discuss these issues than boys. Friends are also a more important source of opinion for those from ABC1 socio-economic backgrounds than their C2DE counterparts.
- 5.3.3 With parents a key source of information and advice, it was important to ask them whether they would consider vocational alternatives for their children at the end of Years 9 (S2) and 11 (S4). Although GCSEs dominated with 71 per cent, there was support for vocational qualifications with one in five open to that pathway and 15 per cent felt that a Young Apprenticeship might also be appropriate. Only one in ten imagined that a 14-19 Diploma would be an option. There were clear divisions in terms of socio-economic background with

a quarter of C2DEs believing that vocational qualifications such as NVQs were an option, compared with 14 per cent of ABC1s. Whilst 79 per cent of ABC1s considered GCSEs a potential pathway, a lower proportion of C2DEs (63 per cent) felt likewise.

- 5.3.4 At the end of Year 11 (S4) around one in five parents felt that vocational qualifications or Apprenticeships might be appropriate. The academic route (A-levels / Highers) was selected by nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) and around one in ten suggested that getting a job would be the likely option for their child.
- 5.3.5 Again there were significant divisions between parents on the basis of socio-economic background (see Figure 30). Just over half (51 per cent) of C2DE parents felt that A-levels / Highers were a potential option for their child, compared with 72 per cent of ABC1s. Apprenticeships were considered an option for 29 per cent of C2DEs, but just ten per cent of ABC1s.
- 5.3.6 These variations are further reflected in the educational attainment level of the parent. Only 41 per cent of parents who had left the education system at GCSE equivalent level felt that A-levels / Highers were an option for their child, while over a third considered Apprenticeships appropriate, and 38 per cent felt that vocational qualifications such as NVQs were a suitable choice. In comparison just 11 per cent of those who had achieved a university degree felt that vocational qualifications were an appropriate route for their child and eight per cent felt likewise about Apprenticeships.

Figure 30: Which of the following options do you feel would be appropriate for them after Year 11 / S4? (by socio-economic background)



Base: ABC1 parents (217), C2DE parents (160)

5.4 How well informed are pupils about educational choices and from what sources do they get their information?

- 5.4.1 The results discussed above suggest that the attitudes, experience and research of both young people and their parents are very important for decision making. Unfortunately only 37 percent of those in Key Stage 3 felt either 'extremely' or 'fairly' well informed about their options after Year 9 (S2). This is higher among 13-14s at just under half of those surveyed, but is still significantly lower than those in Key Stage 4, of whom 69 per cent felt 'extremely' or 'fairly' well informed.
- 5.4.2 In addition to parents, friends and teachers, some pupils obtain information about educational choices through social networking and other websites. A sizeable minority (21 per cent) of those in Key Stage 3 said that they have gained information from websites, particularly Facebook (11 per cent).

- 5.4.3 This rises significantly for those considering their post-16 options, 43 per cent of whom (44 per cent in 2008) have used the internet to gather information. This rises to 52 per cent when just 15 and 16 year olds are isolated as sub-group, with only a third of 13-14s having done so at that stage in their school life. Nearly a quarter of all those surveyed had visited 'Connexions Direct (It's your choice)', a proportion that is much higher among girls (28 per cent) than boys (19 per cent). Girls were also more likely to use Facebook, Bebo and other websites to find out information about post-16 decisions. Facebook was a source of information for one in ten of those surveyed with UCAS important for eight per cent and other websites of lower usage.
- 5.4.4 All sources of information considered, around a third of 11-14s felt that there is too little available about what to do after Year 9 (S2). This was consistent with 2008 (34 per cent) and the proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils who felt likewise in this year's survey was a similarly concerning 38 per cent.

5.5 Sources of influence – parents and teachers

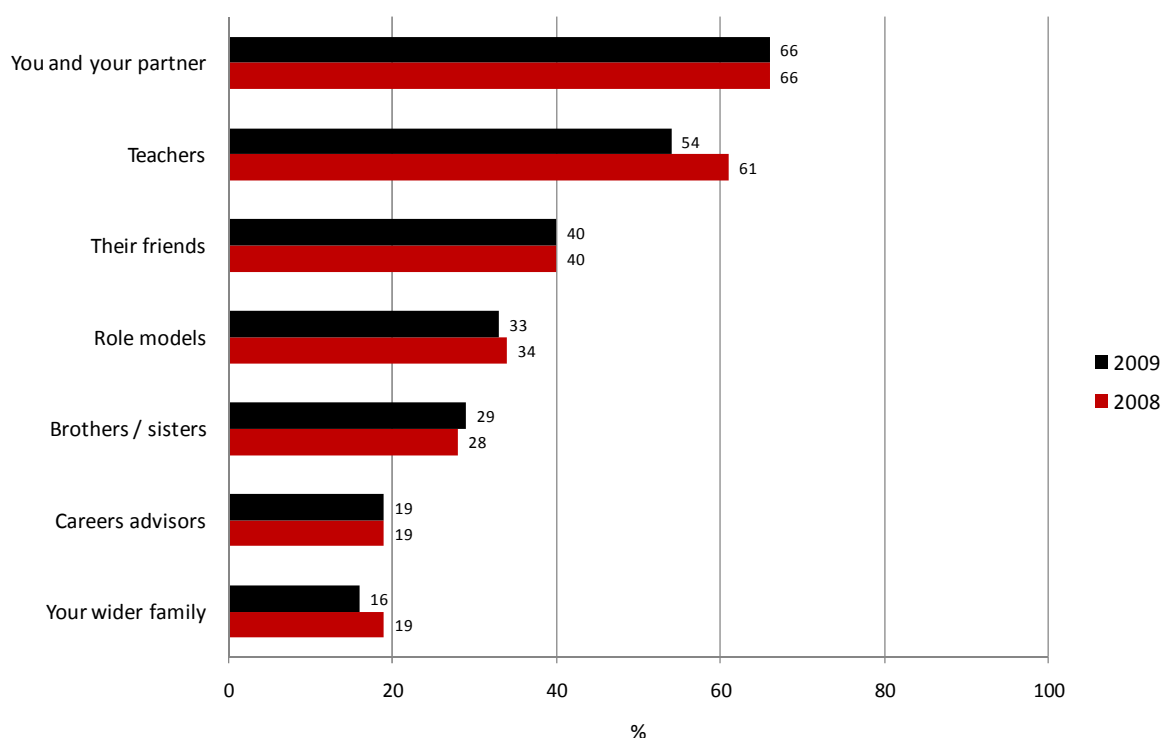
- 5.5.1 Eighty-nine percent of the Key Stage 3 sub-group felt that their parents would prefer them to take GCSEs (Standards). Around one in ten felt that their parents were open to alternatives such as 14-19 Diplomas, Apprenticeships and vocational qualifications. These figures were consistent across the age group from 11 to 14.
- 5.5.2 With 19 per cent unsure, the pupils surveyed were less certain about what their teacher(s) might want them to do. Seventy-eight percent thought that GCSEs (Standards) were their teachers preferred option for them and few (seven per cent at the highest) thought that Apprenticeships, vocational qualifications and 14-19 Diplomas were preferred.
- 5.5.3 Coming up to Year 11, over half of those surveyed (57 per cent) felt that their teachers would prefer them to take A-levels (Highers). One in five believed that their teachers thought it was up to them and did not have a preference. At this stage even fewer felt that their teachers would prefer them to follow a vocational route or Apprenticeship. These

figures for the preferences of teachers at the Year 11 decision point were very similar to the preferences of parents.

- 5.5.4 When young people consider the person or people who have had the strongest influence on their plans at Year 9 (S2) and Year 11 (S4), their parents are the most frequently mentioned source. This was the case for 40 per cent of pupils in Key Stage 3 and 37 per cent in Key Stage 4. Many feel that no one else has strongly influenced them. This was the case for over a quarter (27 per cent) in Key Stage 3 and a third in Key Stage 4. Only between four and seven percent of young people indicated that friends or teachers have had the strongest influence on their decision making.
- 5.5.5 How influential parents are was contested by the parents themselves. Two-thirds felt that they have or do influence their children's learning choice either 'a lot' or 'a great deal'. There was evidence of differences on the basis of socio-economic background with 74 per cent of ABC1 parents stating that their influence was this strong, compared with just 56 per cent of C2DEs. Relative to other influencers, parents see themselves as having the greatest effect, but many also acknowledge the role of teachers (see

Figure 31). It is of interest to note that as many as 40 per cent of parents credit their children's friends as having a high degree of influence and mothers tended to emphasize friends and role models more than fathers, who in turn gave a higher status to the influence of teachers.

Figure 31: To what extent do you think each of the following does or did influence your children's learning choices? (A lot or a great deal of influence; parents by year)



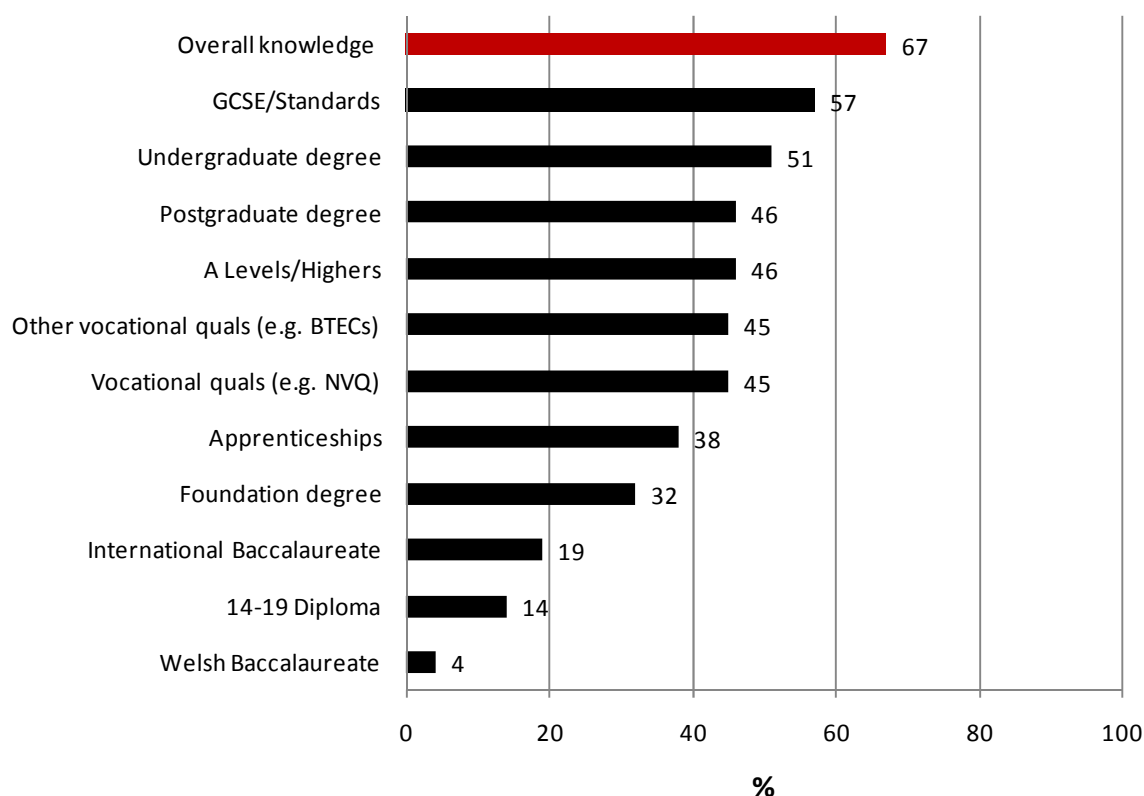
Base: all parents (2008= 1,030, 2009=1,013)

5.6 How well informed are parents about educational choices?

- 5.6.1 In contrast most parents (67 per cent) rate their knowledge of 11-18 qualification options as either 'good' or 'very good'. However over half (51 per cent) believed that there is too little information about the choices after Year 9 and 54 per cent believed likewise about their children's choices after the age of 16.
- 5.6.2 Although parents believed that they have a reasonably good knowledge overall of the qualification options available for their children, this does not necessarily translate into a good knowledge about individual qualifications. With the exception of GCSE (Standards) and undergraduate degrees, fewer than half of parents in the survey have a very good or good knowledge of other qualifications (see

Figure 32).

Figure 32 : How strongly would you rate your knowledge of the following qualifications (good or very good)

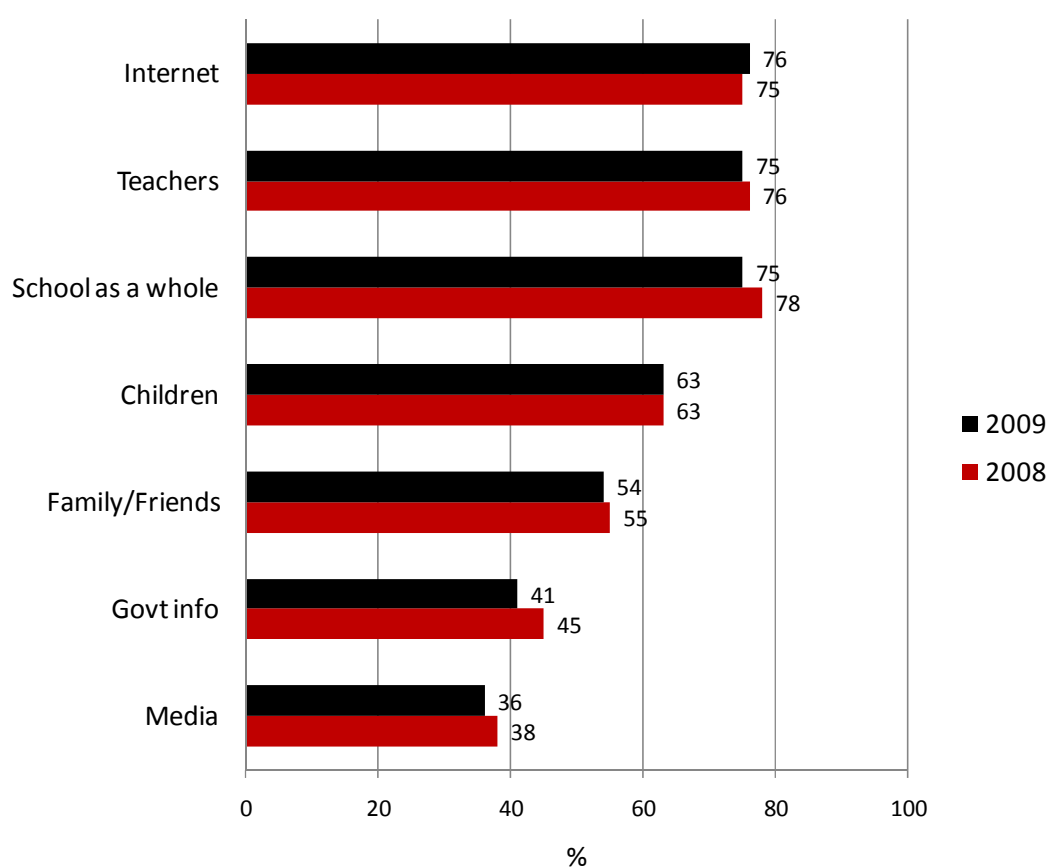


Base: all parents (1,013)

- 5.6.3 What is also notable is the low level of knowledge about 14-19 Diplomas, a position unchanged from 2008 and lower than the International Baccalaureate (IB). Both the Diplomas and the IB, as relatively new entrants in the qualifications landscape, have received a fair amount of media coverage and discussion in the last year; however neither has made a significantly greater impression in the minds of parents.
- 5.6.4 The school, its teachers and the internet were considered the three most useful sources of information about educational choices, as they were in 2008. The use of the internet does not differ significantly by age of the parent and those with children at Key Stage 4 have a very similar view of the relative usefulness of these sources of information. There are some

interesting differences on the basis on the educational attainment of parents with those educated to degree level more likely to find information from teachers (27 per cent) and the school to be 'not very' or 'not at all' useful than those educated at A-level (17 per cent).

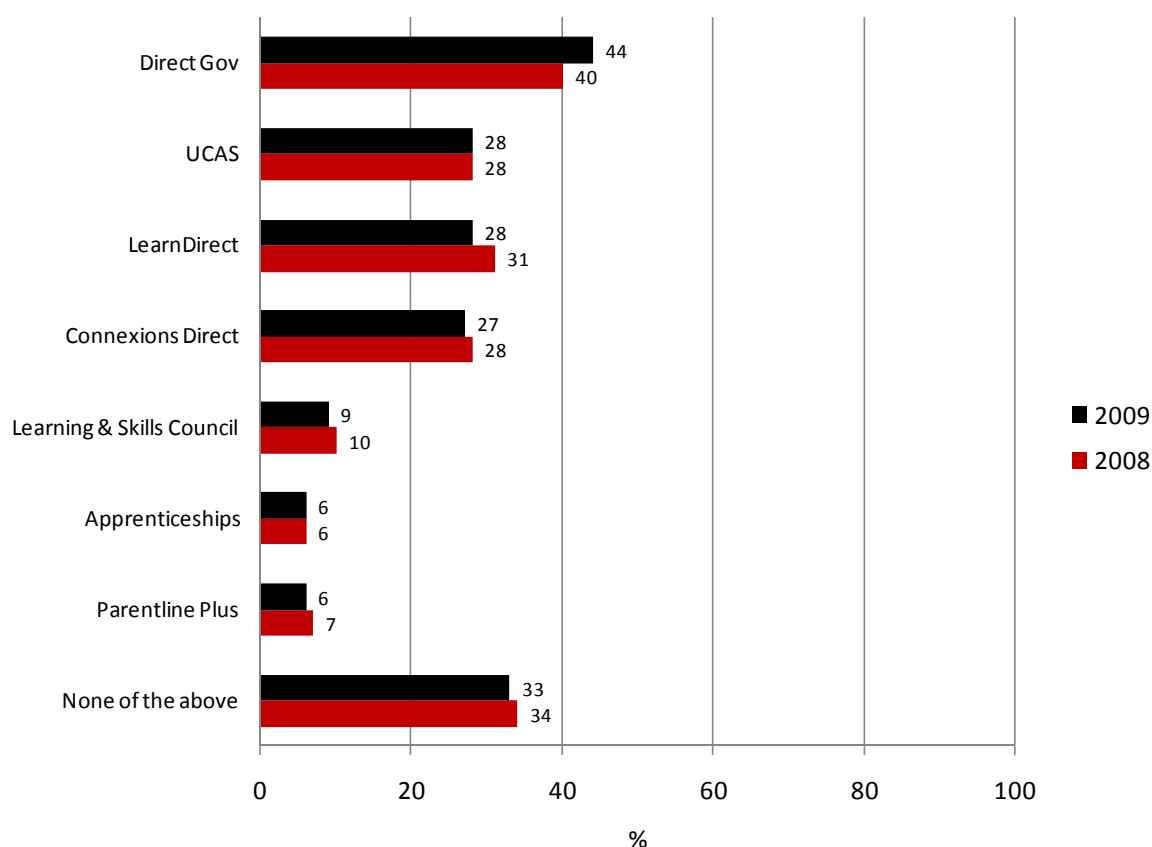
Figure 33: Parents saying that the source of information was very useful or useful concerning choices after Year 9 (S2) in 2008 and 2009



Base: parents with a child at KS3 (2008=392, 2009=454)

5.6.5 Two-thirds of parents have visited websites for information, a figure that is higher than pupils of all ages. Direct Gov has been consulted by nearly half of parents surveyed and UCAS, LearnDirect and Connexions Direct (*Which Way Now?* and *It's Your Choice*) are also significant sources of information.

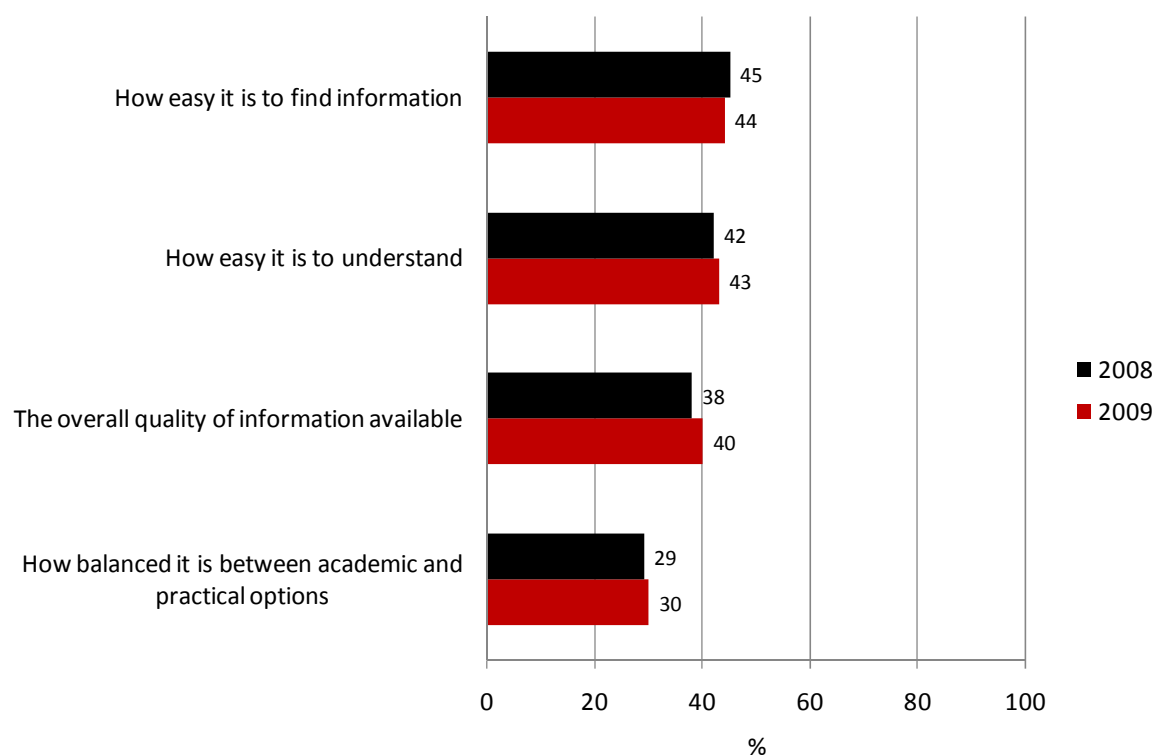
Figure 34: Which, if any of the following organisations, services or websites have you gone to for information? (Parents)



Base: all parents (2008= 1,030, 2009=1,013)

- 5.6.6 Earlier in this report it was revealed that a third of pupils coming up to the Year 9 (S2) decision point felt that there was too little information. The figure amongst parents with children at this stage was even higher at 51 per cent. A similar proportion (54 per cent) of parents of children coming up to the Year 11 (S4) decision point also felt that there was too little information. At both stages only a small minority (one or two percent) believed that there was too much information.
- 5.6.7 All parents were asked about the quality of information, how easy it is to find and to understand. Satisfaction levels were not high; none of the four aspects were rated as satisfactory by even half of the parents surveyed, nor had the figures changed significantly in comparison with 2008.

Figure 35: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of information on learning and qualification choices?



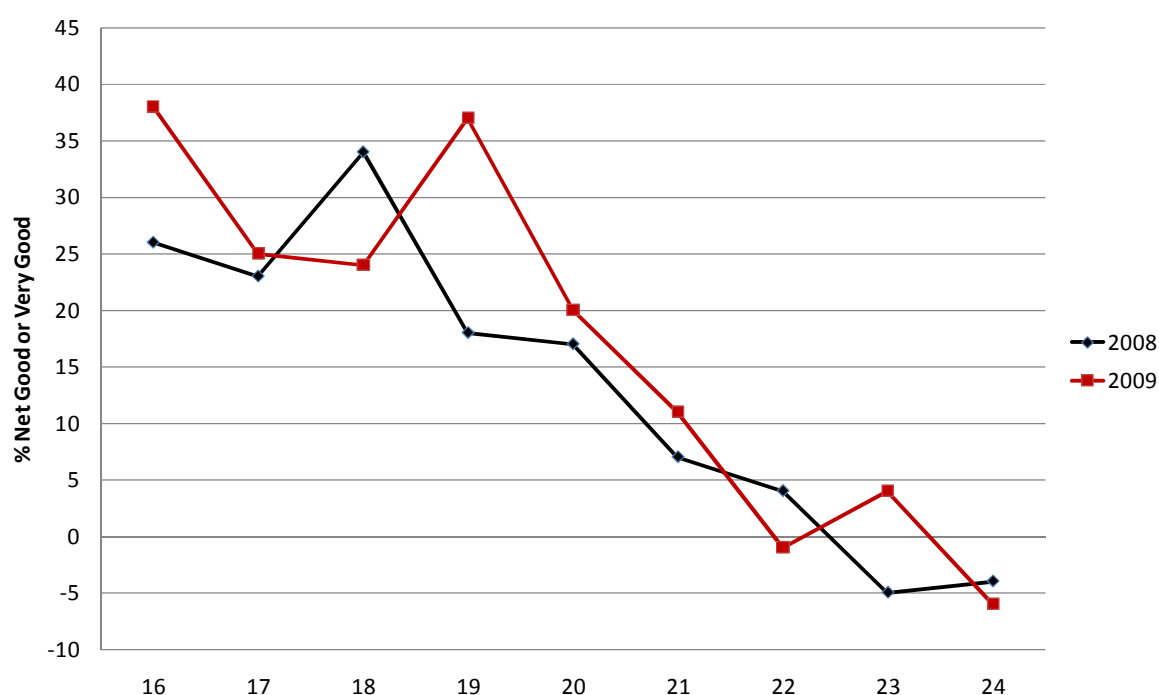
Base: all parents (2008= 1,030, 2009=1,013)

5.7 How good is the careers and learning choices information provided by schools?

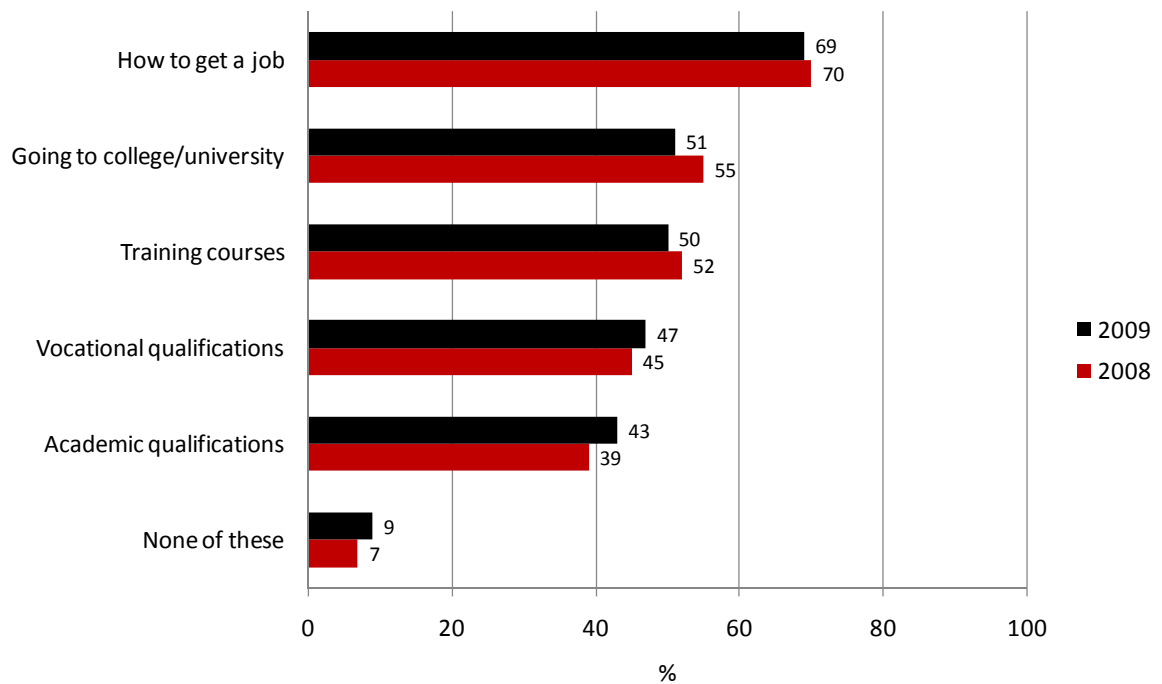
- 5.7.1 Young people and parents were asked to rate the careers advice provided in schools. As shown earlier, relatively few parents (one in five) felt that careers advisers were a strong influence on their children. A third of those considering their options after Year 11 (S4) had spoken to a careers adviser, but very few felt that they had been the greatest influence on their decision making.
- 5.7.2 A fifth of parents felt that they could not adequately rate the careers advice provided at their child's school. Thirty-eight per cent of those that could felt that it was 'good' or 'very good'; a finding that was consistent with 2008. Forty-four per cent of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 rated the advice they received as 'very good' or 'good', although over a quarter felt that it had been 'poor' or 'very poor'.

5.7.3 What is very clear is that perceptions of the advice received at school worsen depending on the age of the young person surveyed to the extent that there are more people aged 24 who believe that the advice was poor than felt that it was good. Figure 36 displays how the rating of advice falls with age using 'net good' advice scores for the 2008 and 2009 surveys.

Figure 36: Net good advice scores by age (2008 and 2009)



5.7.4 Those who stated that the advice they received was poor or very poor were asked what they might have wanted to have better advice about. Around half would have appreciated better advice about vocational qualifications and training courses. Sixty-nine percent, rising to 71 per cent of 19-20s would have liked better advice about how to get a job. Women were more likely than men to have wanted better advice across all subject areas.

Figure 37: What aspects would you have wanted better advice on?

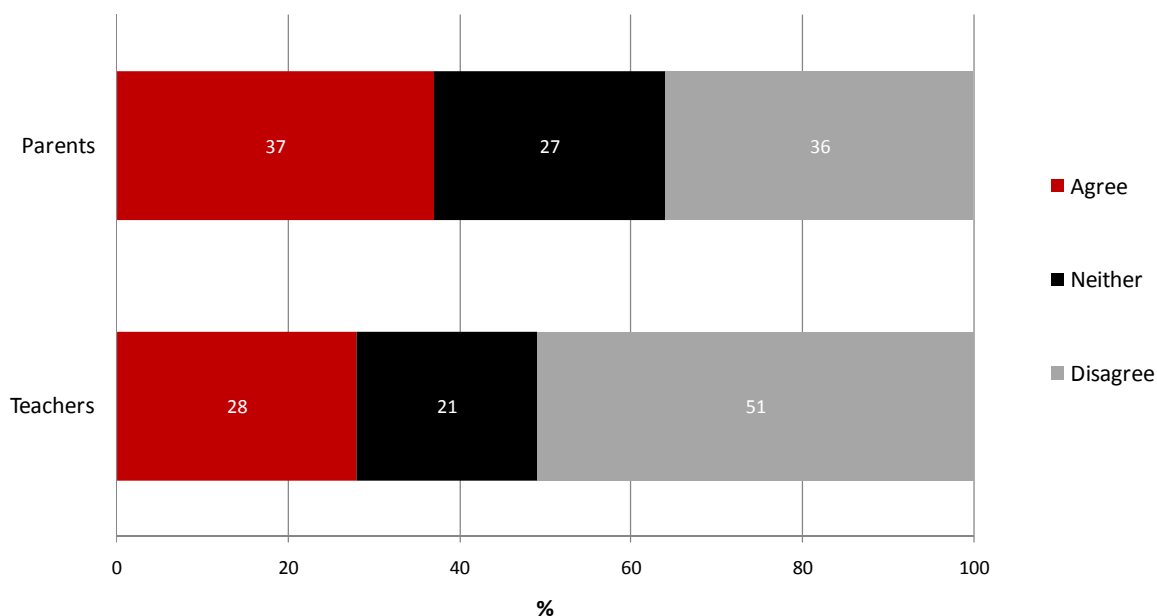
Base: young people who thought the advice was poor (2008=854, 2009=718)

6 Business in Schools

6.1 Experiencing the workplace whilst in school

- 6.1.1 As in the research carried out last year, opinions among parents and teachers are relatively evenly balanced in relation to whether children have or will have enough opportunities to experience the workplace. However teachers remain more likely than parents to disagree that students have enough opportunities (51 per cent compared with 36 per cent of parents). Parents are more evenly split among those who agree that there are enough opportunities (34 per cent), disagree (36 per cent) or neither agree nor disagree (27 per cent).
- 6.1.2 Older parents remain more likely to feel students get enough opportunities for workplace experience (39 per cent of parents aged 55+ compared with 29 per cent among parents aged 35-44). Teachers in sixth form/ FE colleges are also less convinced that there are enough opportunities (17 per cent compared with 30 per cent of state school teachers).

Figure 38: Students have enough opportunities to experience the workplace whilst at school (teachers and parents)



Base: parents (926), teachers (1,012). Figures exclude don't knows.

6.2 Supply of opportunities and types of employer engagement

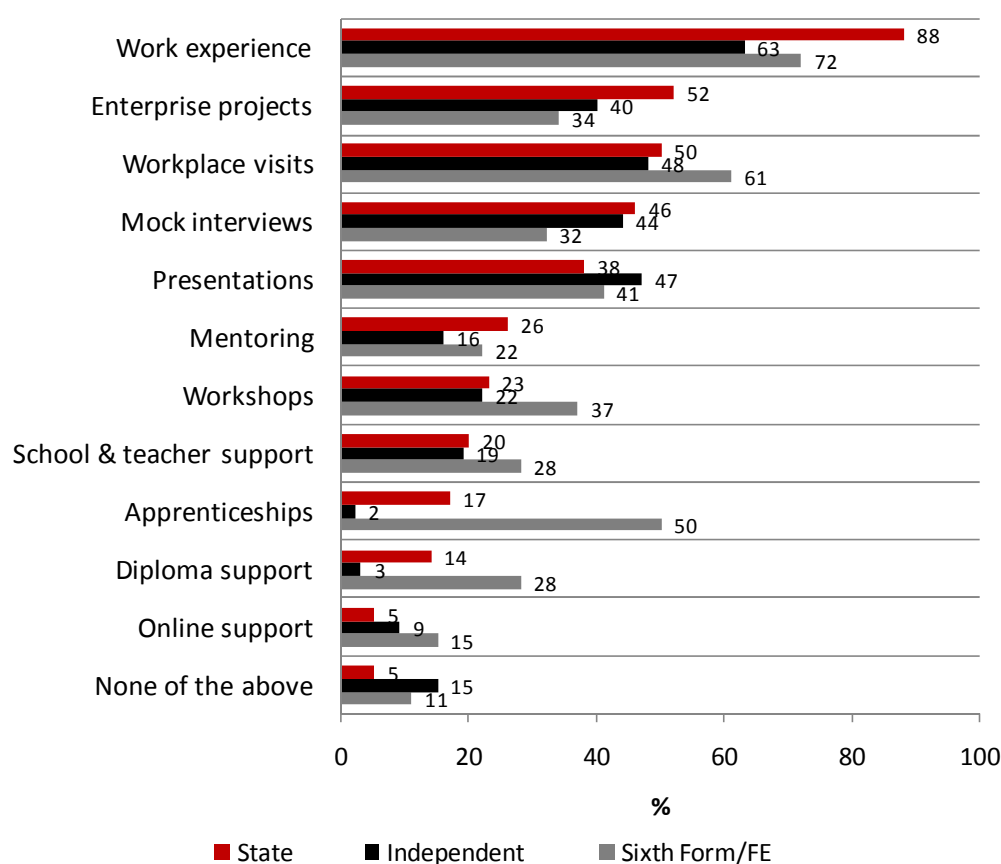
From the teacher's viewpoint

- 6.2.1 Just one per cent of teachers felt there is currently too much employer engagement at their school – a slight decline from the five per cent reported last year (although this is not statistically significant). Similarly to last year nearly two-thirds (59 per cent) felt there is too little employer engagement and a further third (32 per cent) that the balance was about right.
- 6.2.2 The largest pool of teachers in the research (from comprehensives) were most likely to report too little engagement (62 per cent), followed by nearly half of teachers in other types of school (independent schools 49 per cent, sixth form/ FE 52 per cent).
- 6.2.3 As may be expected, teachers from schools that have a nominated staff member to liaise with local businesses were significantly more likely to report the balance of employer engagement is about the right amount (41 per cent), although it is important to note that more felt that there was not enough (54 per cent).
- 6.2.4 Rather than the teachers in sixth forms or FE colleges who were identified last year as more likely to feel the balance was correct, this year's research identifies independent school teachers (41 per cent) as those most likely to think so, followed by a third of state school teachers (31 per cent) and sixth form/FE teachers (33 per cent).
- 6.2.5 Teachers of vocational and work-based learning programmes were the least likely to think there is the correct amount of employer engagement (24 per cent, compared with 34 per cent of those who teach academic subjects), while 67 per cent of these think there is too little.
- 6.2.6 A third of teachers with more than two years experience say their school has not been involved in any employer engagement activities. Among those whose school had been involved in engagement activities the top five most frequently reported activities were work experience, enterprise projects, workplace visits, mock interviews and presentations.
- 6.2.7 Teachers from the independent/ private sector were least likely to report that their school had been involved in business engagement activities (15 per cent had not taken part in any activities). The one activity which their schools were more likely to have taken part in than

other types of schools was presentations by businesses (47 per cent compared with 38 per cent of teachers in state schools).

- 6.2.8 Over half of teachers in sixth form/ FE education report that their college had been involved in workplace visits (61 per cent) and Apprenticeships (50 per cent). State schools were more likely to have taken part in work experience (88 per cent), enterprise projects (52 per cent), and to a lesser extent mock interviews (46 per cent).
- 6.2.9 Due to a slight change to the question wording there is no direct comparison to last year's research. However the top three most common engagement activities are broadly similar to those reported last year, when teachers were asked if they themselves had been involved in any of the activities rather than their school as a whole.

Figure 39: In the last TWO years, has your school/ college been involved in any of the following activities with businesses?

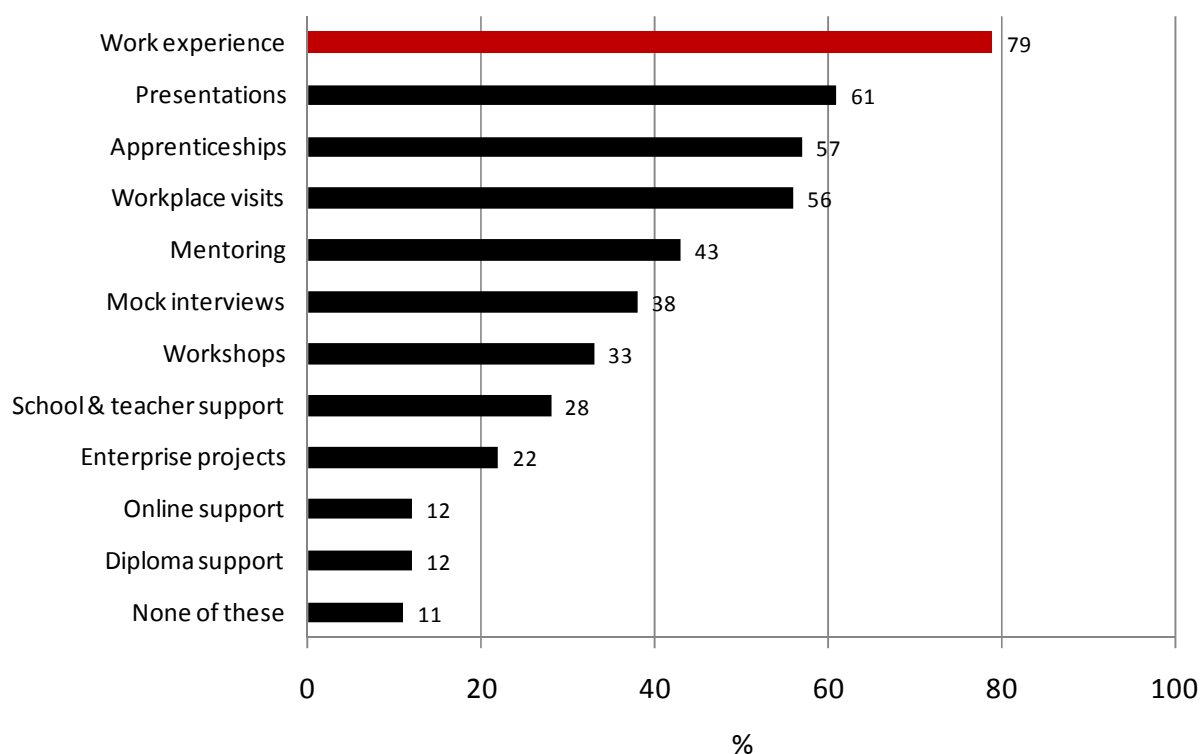


Base: state teachers (712), independent teachers (105), sixth form/FE lecturers (131)

From the employer's perspective

- 6.2.10 In line with the findings from last year, two-thirds (67 per cent) of employers felt their organisation was not well informed about opportunities to engage with schools. On a scale of one to ten, where one is very poorly informed, and ten is fully informed, the average answer given was 4.45. Only four per cent said they were fully informed, with a third (33 per cent) ranking their level as 6 or above. Employers based in the East of England were the least informed (answering an average of 3.9), while those in the North were the most (5.02).
- 6.2.11 A clear distinction based on the size of businesses remains. Large organisations continue to be most informed, answering an average of 4.81 on the 10 point scale. In contrast, smaller organisations are much less informed (micro organisations gave an average score of 3.69 out of ten, and small organisations 3.92). Among business sectors, public sector employers continue to be the most informed (5.75), followed by those in the charity/voluntary sector (4.94), and lastly the private sector (4.03).
- 6.2.12 Work experience was the activity employers were most aware of (79 per cent). Presentations (61 per cent), Apprenticeships (57 per cent) and workplace visits (56 per cent) were also recognised by over half of employers. These results show little change since 2008, however awareness of Apprenticeships has increased somewhat (from 48 per cent last year).
- 6.2.13 Work experience was by far the most recognised activity among employers who do not currently engage with the education sector (64 per cent), with a drop of eighteen per cent to the next most recognised activity (Apprenticeships 46 per cent).

Figure 40: Which of the following types of engagement activity were you aware of?



Base: all employers (1,001)

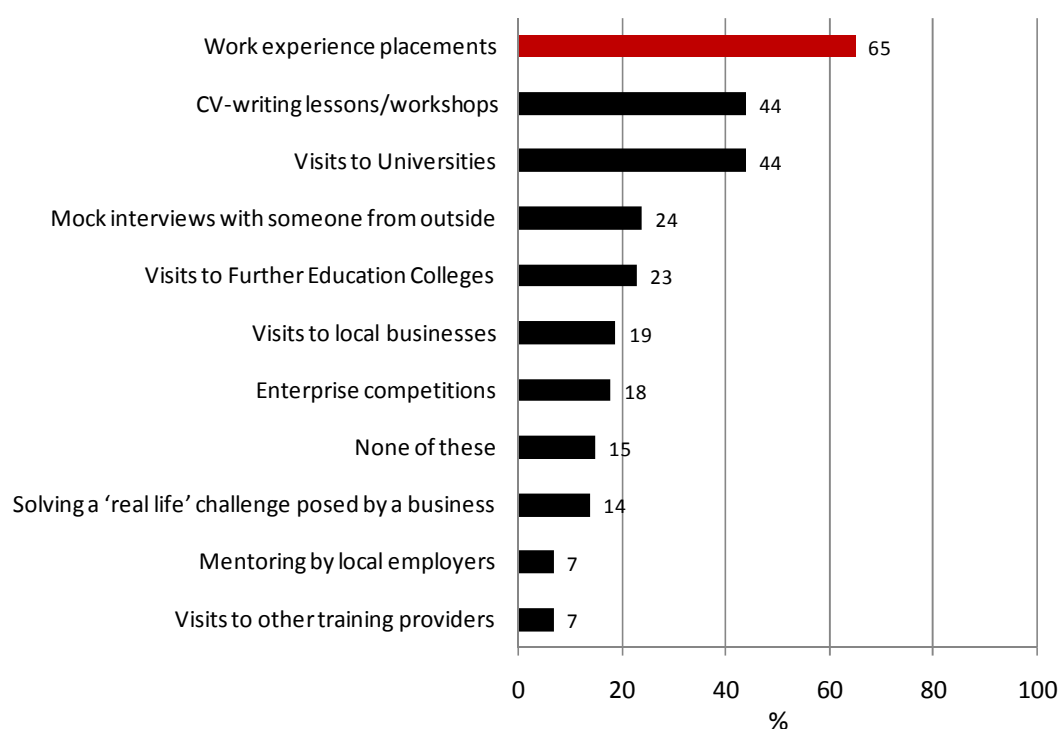
6.2.14 Awareness of specific engagement activities reflects the pattern of which groups feel most informed generally about opportunities to engage. That is, awareness of all activities was higher amongst public sector employers (only six per cent were not aware of any), and large businesses (nine per cent not aware of any).

6.3 Demand for engagement activities from young people

6.3.1 Students in Key Stage 4 and above were asked which activities that involve local businesses they had taken part in while at school/ college. The most common activities were work experience (65 per cent), visits to universities (44 per cent), and CV workshops (44 per cent). Other activities such as visits to local businesses (19 per cent), enterprise competitions (18 per cent), real-life challenges (14 per cent) and mentoring (seven per cent) were less commonly experienced.

6.3.2 As would be expected participation levels increased amongst those still in education at Key Stage 5 (12 per cent in Key Stage 5 compared with 27 per cent in Key Stage 4 said they had not participated in any of these activities).

Figure 41: Which, if any, of the following activities have you taken part in while in school/college?



Base: All at Key Stage 4 and above (1,710)

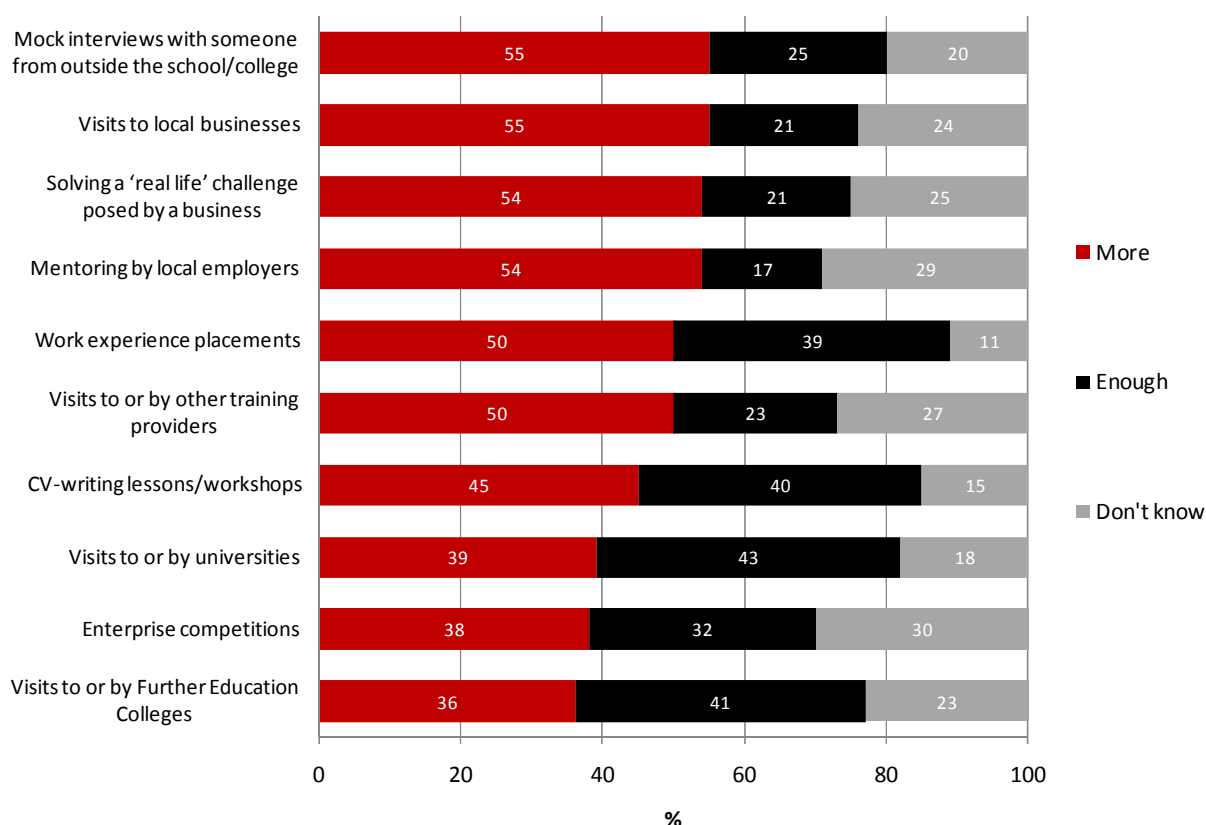
6.3.3 As was reported last year, children and young people would generally like more opportunities to engage in activities. Mock interviews and visits to local businesses were viewed highly, with 55 per cent wanting more of these opportunities. Around half of those interviewed felt that more of most types of activity would be beneficial.

6.3.4 The profile of those wanting more opportunities was more likely to be:

- Female rather than male *although enterprise competitions are equally popular for both males and females;
- In state schools rather than independent schools;

- Currently on a training course, Apprenticeship or not working, studying or training.

Figure 42: For each of these activities would you say that you have or had enough opportunities to take part or would you have wanted more?



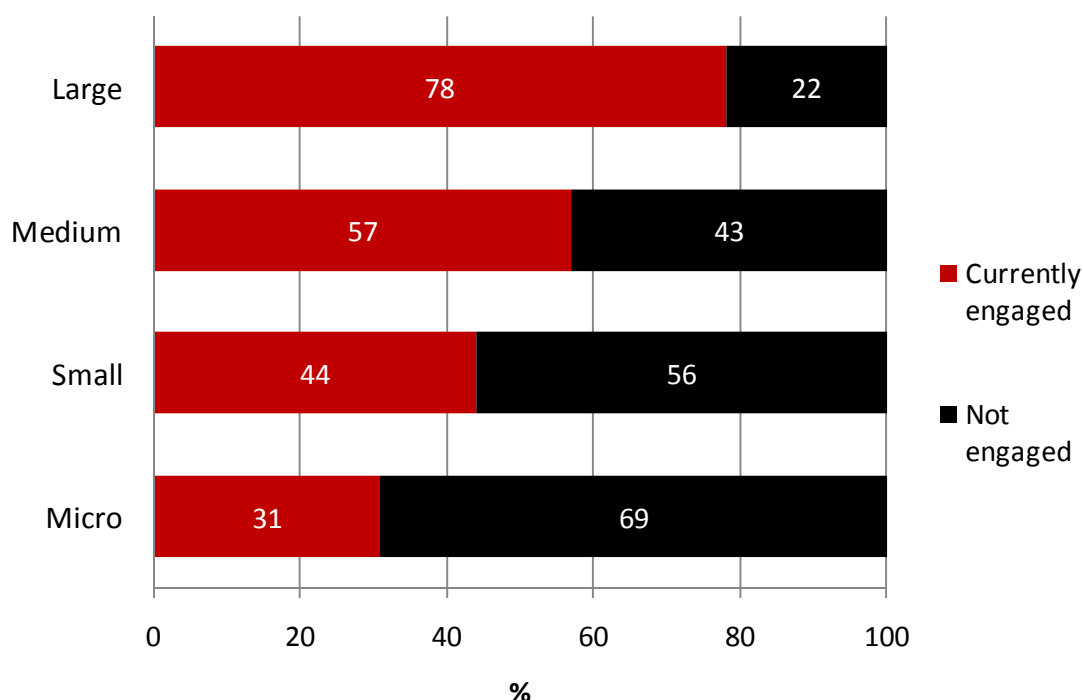
Base: All at Key Stage 4 and above (1,710)

6.4 The willingness of employers to engage

- 6.4.1 As reported last year, employers remain positive about engaging with the education sector. When asked to rank how willing their organisation is to engage with the education sector the average answer was 6.66. Just three per cent answered 'one', that is, not at all willing to engage, while two-thirds gave an answer of six or above (66 per cent).
- 6.4.2 Employers in the private sector were slightly less positive about engagement opportunities, answering an average of 6.24, behind the 7.89 reported by those in the voluntary/ charity sector, and 7.70 by the public sector.

- 6.4.3 Among employers that currently do not engage with the education sector, over half indicated low willingness to do so (55 per cent answering 1-5) and of these ten per cent are not at all willing. However, 44 per cent are generally willing to do so (answering 6-10). This shows little change from the forty per cent reported last year.
- 6.4.4 There were few regional differences, although London does stand out as generally less willing to take part (answering an average of 5.99 out of ten).
- 6.4.5 Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the education sector that is most willing to engage in activities (reporting an average answer of 9). As was reported last year, professional services such as finance reported a lower willingness to engage (answering below 6). It is important to note that the representation of each industry sector is small and so these findings can only be indicative; they do, however, follow similar a pattern from last years research.
- 6.4.6 Sixty-four per cent of employers are currently engaged with the education sector – the same proportion reported last year (63 per cent). Engagement was lower in the private sector (53 per cent) than in the public (93 per cent) and third sector (89 per cent). There remains a clear difference between smaller and larger organisations, with 78 per cent of large employers currently engaging with the education sector, compared with just 43 per cent of SMEs. Engagement was lowest among micro organisations where just under a third (31 per cent) were involved.

Figure 43: Does your organisation currently engage with the education sector in any way? (by organisation size)



Base: employers (934). Figures exclude don't knows.

6.5 The benefits of engagement

For an employer

- 6.5.1 Recruitment opportunities and a better community image were the key benefits mentioned for engaging with the education sector, as they also were last year. These were the benefits mentioned by employers who currently engage in activities with the education sector. Employers in the public sector were generally more likely to mention any activity, excluding Corporate Social Responsibility, which was slightly more popular among private employers (although this is not a statistically significant difference).

Figure 44: What do you see as the main benefits which engagement with the education sector brings to your organisation? (by private / public sector)



Base: employers who currently engage (private sector=325, public sector= 143)

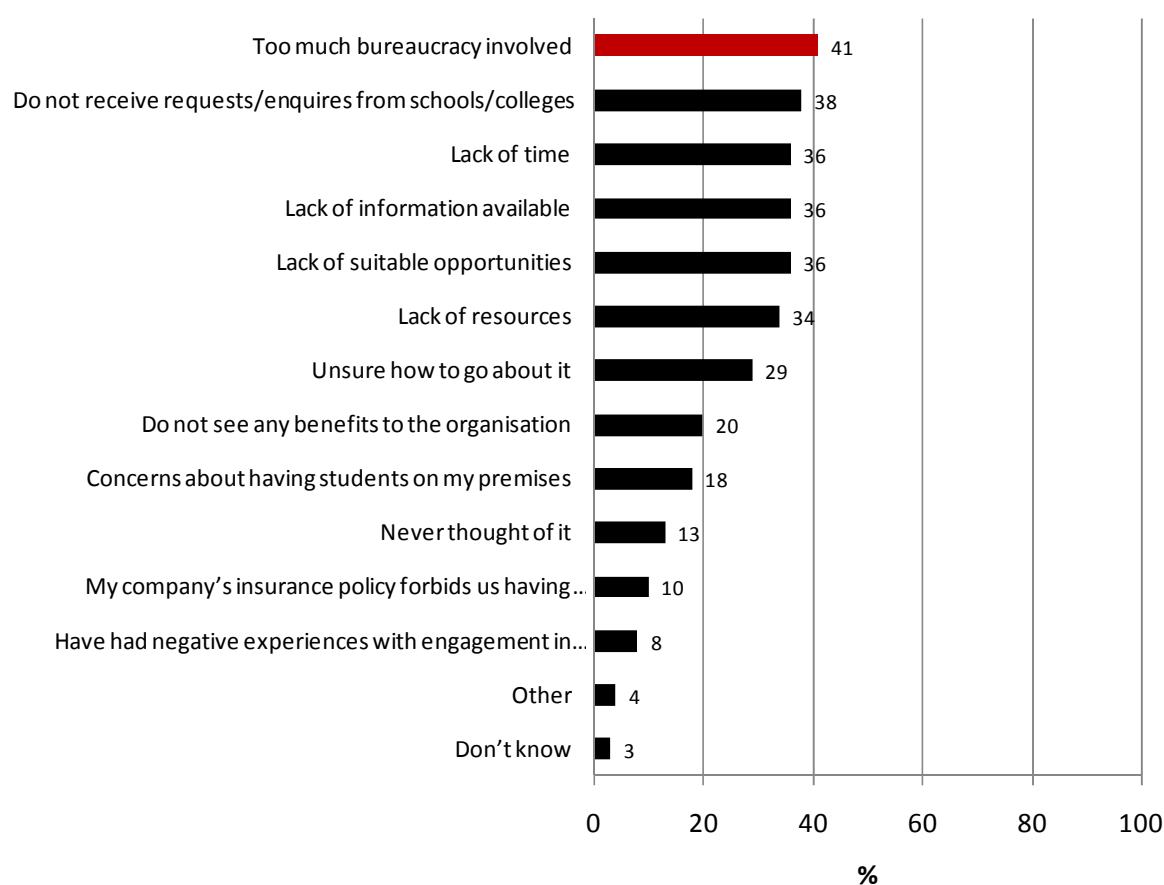
6.5.2 Just one per cent of public sector employers who are currently engaged with the education sector, and four per cent in the private sector did not think there were any benefits to their organisation.

6.6 Barriers to engagement

6.6.1 All employers were asked what barriers exist which stop them engaging with the education sector, or engaging with it more. At least a third mentioned lack of time (35 per cent), lack of resources (34 per cent) and too much bureaucracy (33 per cent), demonstrating no change from last year. This wave of research also reinforces that very few are concerned by a lack of benefits to the organisation, and negative experiences (eight per cent and seven per cent respectively).

- 6.6.2 Many employers did not highlight particular concerns that are stopping them from engaging with the educational sector; rather that a lack of requests from schools or colleges to get involved (25 per cent), lack of information (23 per cent) or being unsure as to how to go about it (15 per cent) are stopping them engaging. Almost a third also mentioned a lack of suitable opportunities (30 per cent).
- 6.6.3 Concerns about having students in their workplace were mentioned by fourteen per cent, and eight per cent were concerned that their company's insurance policy forbids having underage people working on site. This was initially emphasised in last year's research, and is again apparent in the current research; indicating the narrow concept of engagement for many employers who associate it largely with work experience or placements.

Figure 45: What are the main factors which prevent your organisation from engaging more with the education sector?



Base: All employers not currently engaged (406)

- 6.6.4 Among employers who are not currently engaged the top reasons that are stopping them from becoming so is the bureaucracy involved (41 per cent) and a lack of requests from schools and colleges (38 per cent). This was closely followed by a lack of suitable opportunities (36 per cent), information (36 per cent), and perhaps as a symptom of this, a lack of time (36 per cent).
- 6.6.5 In no change from last year, employers in London and the South East were more likely to report a lack of contact from schools and colleges (18 per cent compared with 30 per cent in the north). Likewise, SMEs are more likely to say that they do not receive requests or enquires from schools and colleges (32 per cent), and that they lack the information (31 per cent) or are unsure how to go about engaging with the education sector (19 per cent).
- 6.6.6 The main issues stopping SME's engaging are a lack of suitable opportunities (38 per cent), bureaucracy (37 per cent) and lack of time (35 per cent).

6.7 Work Experience

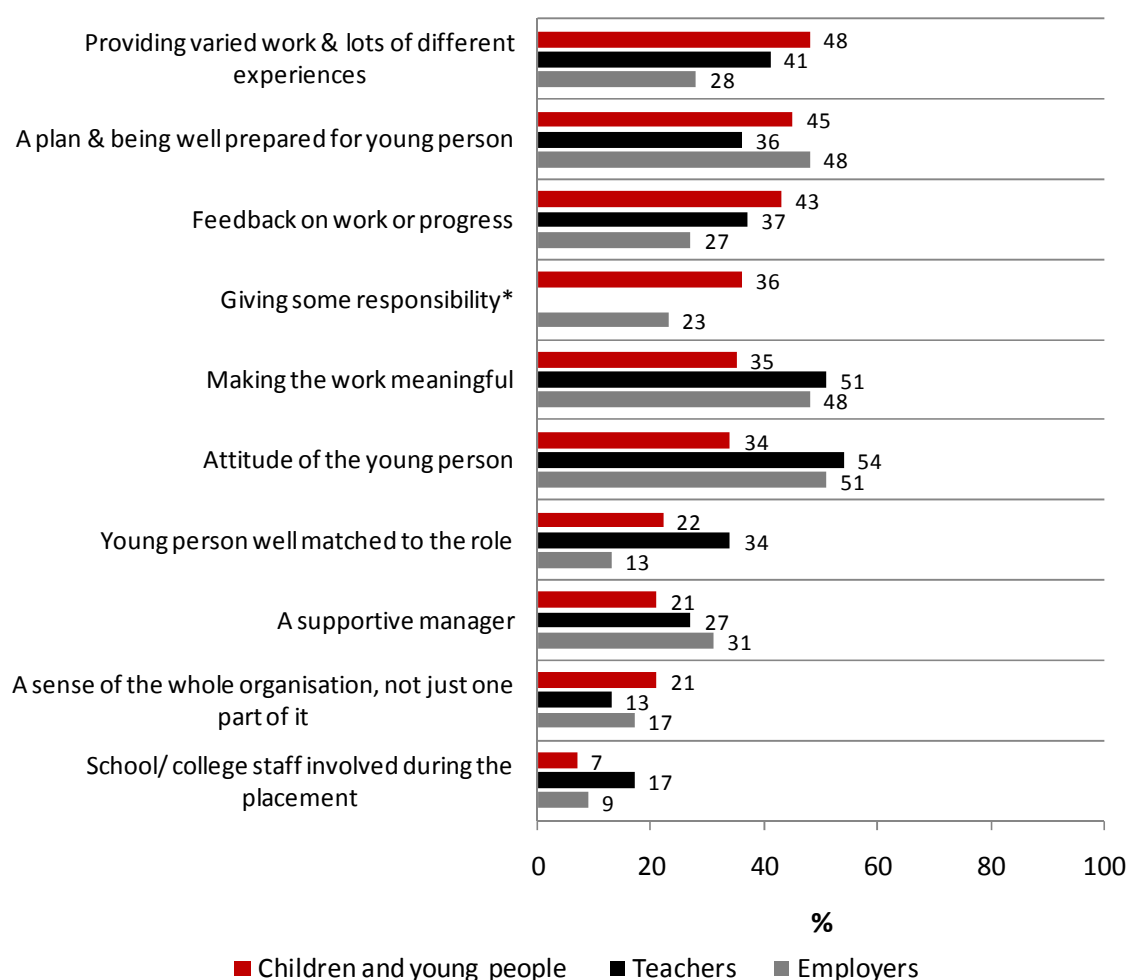
What makes a good placement

- 6.7.1 A new section on work experience was included into the 2009 research, with the aim of identifying what makes a good placement, and conversely, what makes a bad one, and how these factors are borne out by the children and young people in work experience.
- 6.7.2 In highlighting what makes a good work placement, children and young people were generally more likely to mention the range of work available to them and the preparation that goes into accommodating them. Children and young people mention a broader range of factors; excluding involvement of school/ college staff during the placement, the least mentioned factors are nevertheless mentioned by one in five (getting a sense of the whole organisation and having a supportive manager).
- 6.7.3 One student explained the key factors in providing a good work placement:
- *'I think the key thing is that you are actually given an opportunity to experience the business, preferably with a variety of tasks, as opposed to being given something set aside for work experience candidates.'*
- 6.7.4 Both teachers and employers emphasize the attitude of the young person themselves (54 per cent/ 51 per cent respectively) and that the work is meaningful (51 per cent/ 48 per cent). Furthermore teachers agree with students that the work should be varied and involve

lots of different experiences (41 per cent, likewise 48 per cent of children and young people). Employers are keen that there is a plan and they are well prepared for the young person (48 per cent, as also mentioned by 45 per cent of children and young people).

- 6.7.5 Other than teachers themselves, there is not much indication that involvement of school/ college staff during the placement makes for a good work experience (mentioned by seven per cent of children/ students, and nine per cent of employers). Among teachers themselves seventeen per cent thought their involvement is beneficial, although this declines to eight per cent among independent/ public/ private school teachers (compared with 16 per cent of state school teachers, and 29 per cent of sixth form/FE lecturers).

Figure 46: Based on your experiences what are the THREE MOST important factors in making a successful work experience placement?



Base: Children and young people who have been on work experience (1123), teachers who have been involved with work placements (424), employers currently engaged with the education sector (420)

6.7.6 Employers who are generally less engaged, that is the private sector and smaller organisations, are more likely to mention providing varied work and lots of different experiences (31 per cent in the private sector, compared with 21 per cent in the public sector, and, less significantly, 32 per cent in SMEs compared with 26 per cent in large organisations). This is interesting, since in the previous chapter SMEs and the private

* 'Giving some responsibility' not asked to teachers

sector were also more likely to mention that it is a lack of suitable opportunities stopping them from engaging with the education sector.

What makes a poor placement

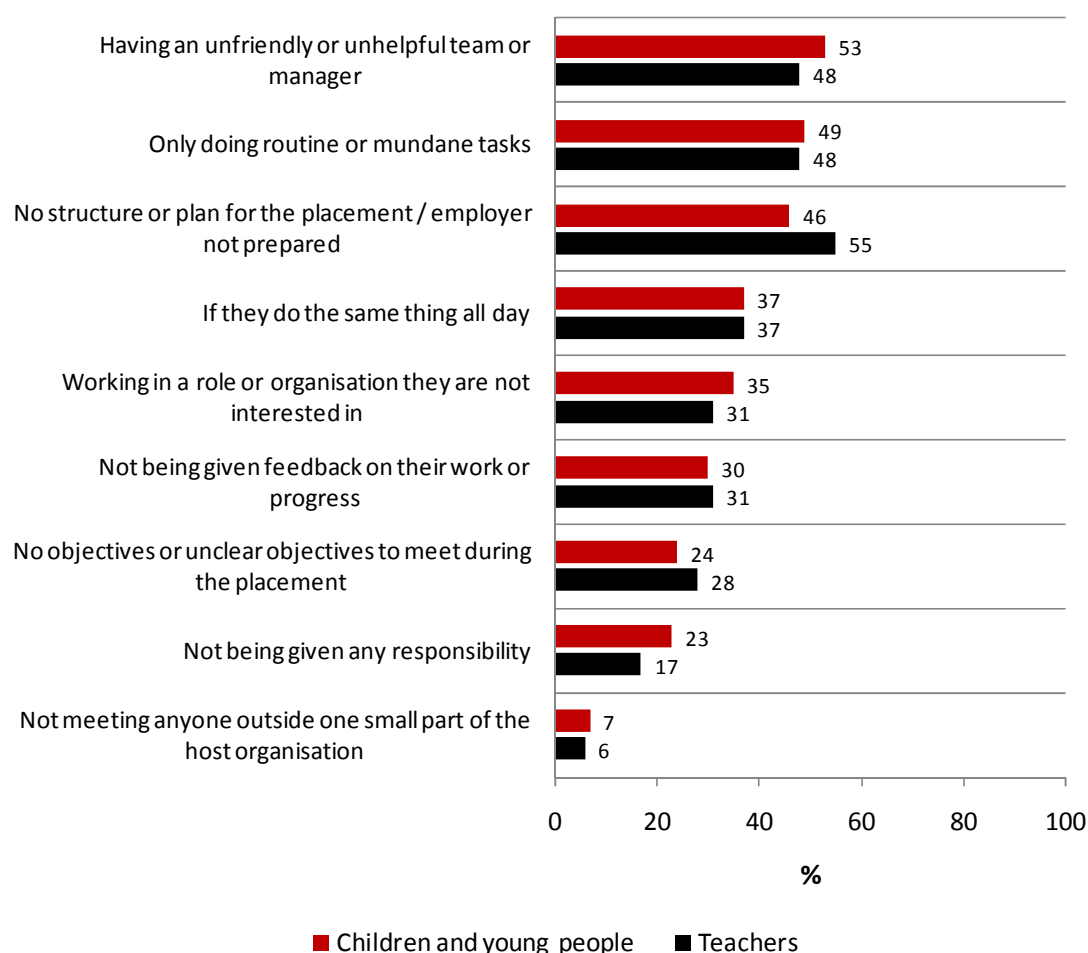
6.7.7 Both students and teachers highlight factors that would discourage interest in a work placement generally, such as unfriendliness and unhelpfulness of the work placement team, doing mundane tasks, and lack of structure or unpreparedness on the employers part, all of which are mentioned by around half of children, young people and teachers.

6.7.8 Asked to elaborate on what makes a poor placement, one student exemplified the importance of engaging tasks and a sense of being involved:

- *'Completely irrelevant to anything I was studying or interested in at the time. Being left alone a lot to get on with mundane tasks. Not becoming part of the team, just feeling another chore for the teachers asking for work.'*

6.7.9 Responsibility, objective setting and feedback are mentioned less, indicating that it is engagement with the task at hand that is of primary importance. This was emphasised by the higher proportion of children, young people and teachers who mention a poor experience as one in which the person does the same thing all day (37 per cent each), or works in a role or organisation they are not interested in (35 per cent/ 31 per cent respectively).

Figure 47: And in your view, which THREE of the following factors make a POOR work experience placement?



Base: Young people who have been on work experience (1123), teachers who have been involved with work experience (424)

6.7.10 Young people who are not working, studying or on a training course are significantly less likely to mention that a lack of responsibility makes for a poor work experience placement (15 per cent compared with 24 per cent who are in full time education, or at university or other higher education institute).

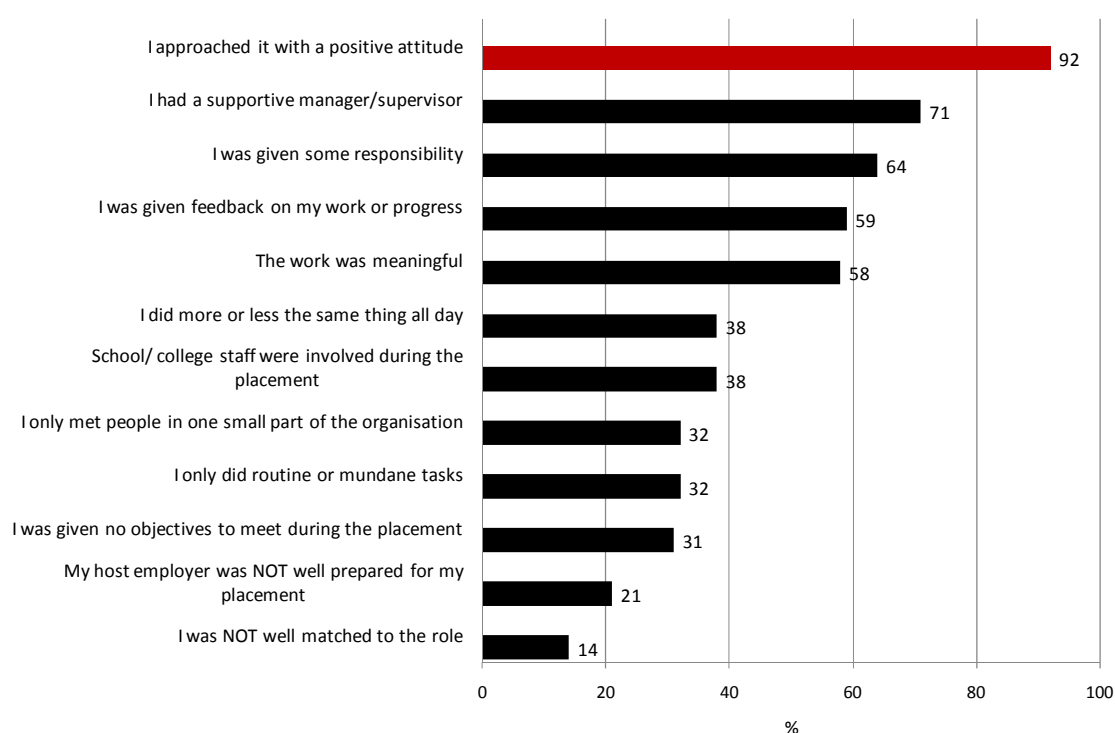
Specific experience of work experience

6.7.11 Overall children and young people who have taken part in work experience are more likely to agree with positive statements than they are with negative ones, in relation to their own experience. The majority agree that they approached the placement with a positive attitude

(92 per cent), and at least half agree they had a supportive manager, were given some responsibility, feedback, and that the work was meaningful.

6.7.12 Around a third had a less positive experience, and felt they did more or less the same thing every day or only did routine or mundane things (38 per cent/ 32 per cent respectively), factors highlighted earlier as ones which make for a poor placement. A further one in five thought their host employer was not well prepared for them (21 per cent).

Figure 48: Thinking about your work experience placement, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (those who agree)



Base: Young people who have been on work experience (1123)

6.7.13 Females are significantly more likely than males to say they did more or less the same thing all day (41 per cent compared with 34 per cent), perhaps reflecting variations in the sectors favoured by each gender for work experience. Those in Key Stage 5 are much more likely to say they did more or less the same thing all day than young people in Key Stage 4 (43 per cent compared with 26 per cent), and are also more likely to agree that the

work was routine or mundane (33 per cent in Key Stage 5, compared with 25 per cent in Key Stage 4). This may reflect higher expectations on the part of older students.

- 6.7.14 There is more agreement among those in Key Stages 4 and 5 that their host employer was not well prepared for them (14 per cent and 17 per cent respectively), however, this remains a significant difference between girls and boys, with girls more likely to think the employer poorly prepared (24 per cent compared with 19 per cent).

6.8 Trends in employer engagement

- 6.8.1 Among employers who are currently engaged with education, a third (34 per cent) are doing so *more* than they did three years ago. Thirteen per cent report less activity and over half (52 per cent) no change over that time period. This situation has remained largely the same from last year.
- 6.8.2 There is more of a sense of optimism with regard to the how the economy is likely to affect engagement in the future; only 22 per cent now see their engagement as likely to decrease – a significant decline from the 30 per cent reported last year. There has been a two per cent rise in the proportion who think their engagement is likely to increase (to 15 per cent *this is not a statistically significant difference from last year). More people now see the economy has having ‘no effect’ on their level of engagement; 63 per cent, a significant rise from the 48 per cent reported last year.

Figure 49: Does your organisation engage with schools more or less than it did three years ago or has there been no change?

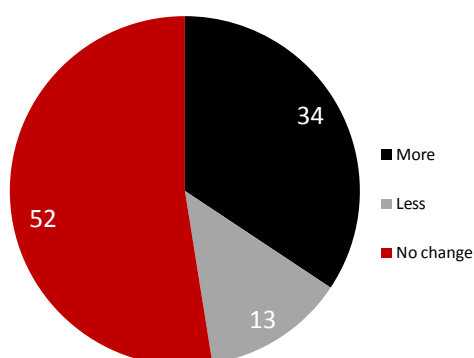
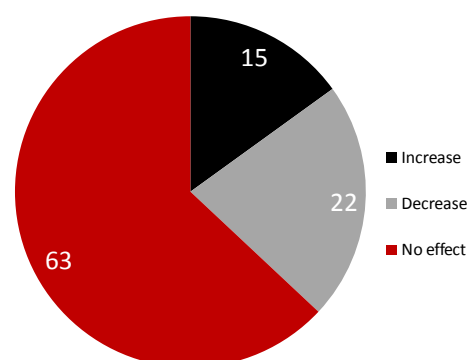


Figure 50: do you think that the future economic situation might increase, decrease or have no effect on your engagement?



Base: Employers who currently engage (493). Figures exclude don't knows.

6.8.3 Seventeen per cent of employers not currently engaged with the education sector felt that economic conditions would decrease their level of involvement. Very few of these employers reported that the economic conditions were likely to *increase* their engagement (seven per cent), while the vast majority expected economic conditions to have no effect (76 per cent).

6.9 Do schools have a nominated member of staff to liaise with local employers?

6.9.1 Just over a quarter of teachers did not know whether their school had a particular member of staff who is nominated to liaise with local businesses (27 per cent). Just over half (51 per cent) say they have a nominated staff member, with the remaining 22 per cent stating they have no such person. These results do not show a significant change from the 2008 research.

6.9.2 Teachers in independent schools were significantly less likely to have a member of staff whose responsibility it is to liaise with local employers (37 per cent do not have such an individual, compared with 20 per cent in comprehensives). As was reported last year, it is

teachers in sixth form/ FE colleges who were most likely to report that there is a nominated person (55 per cent); perhaps a reflection that employer links are a core activity for many FE colleges.

- 6.9.3 Among teachers of vocational and work-based learning programmes 66 per cent say they have a nominated member of staff to liaise with local businesses. as do 58 per cent of those who teach a mixed programme of academic and vocational subjects.

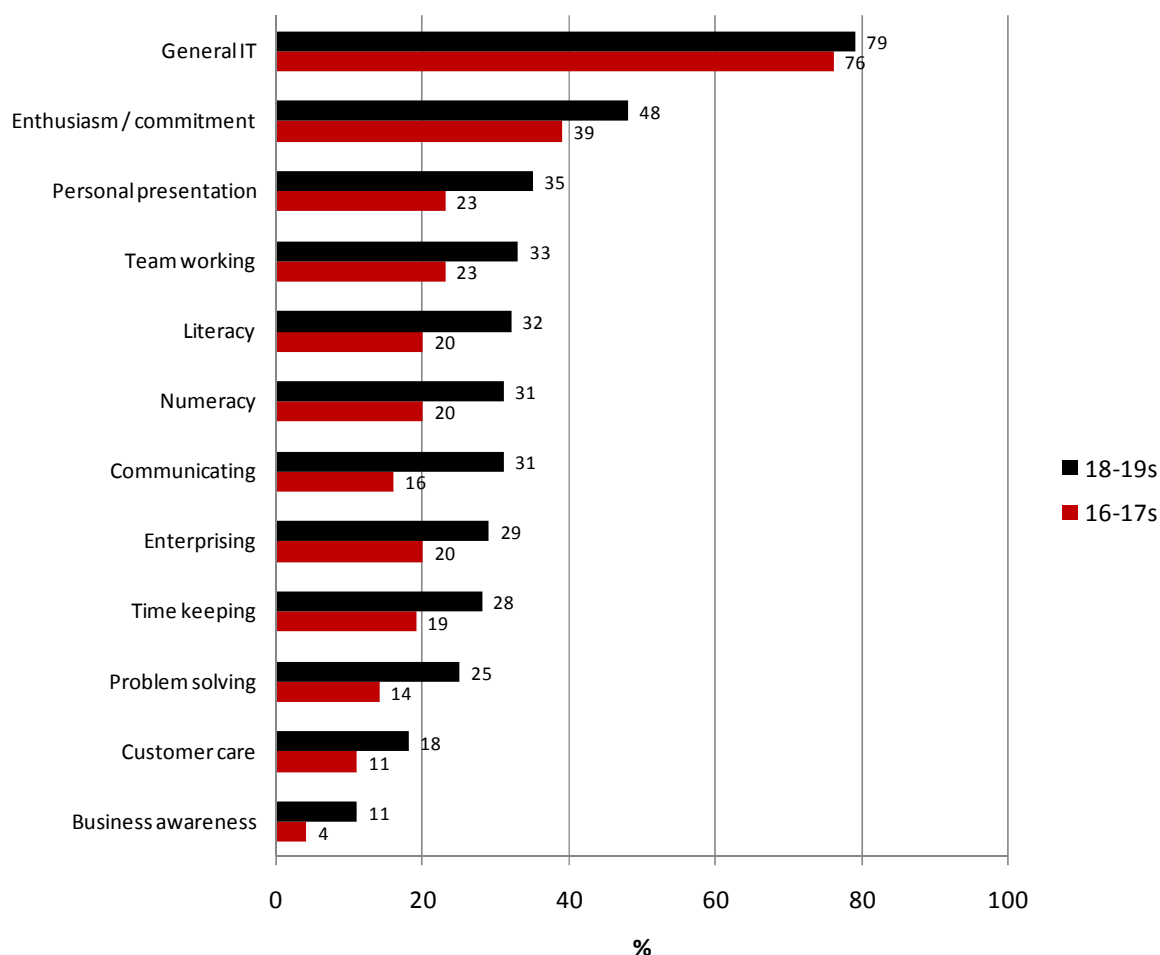
7 Education and the workplace

7.1 Employability skills

Employer views on school / college leavers

7.1.1 Thirty-five per cent of employers would consider school / college leavers aged 16-17 for vacancies and 57 per cent would consider of 18-19 year old leavers. Their views on the employability skills of leavers were largely disappointing.

Figure 51: How would you rate the average school / college leaver in terms of the following skills? (good or very good)



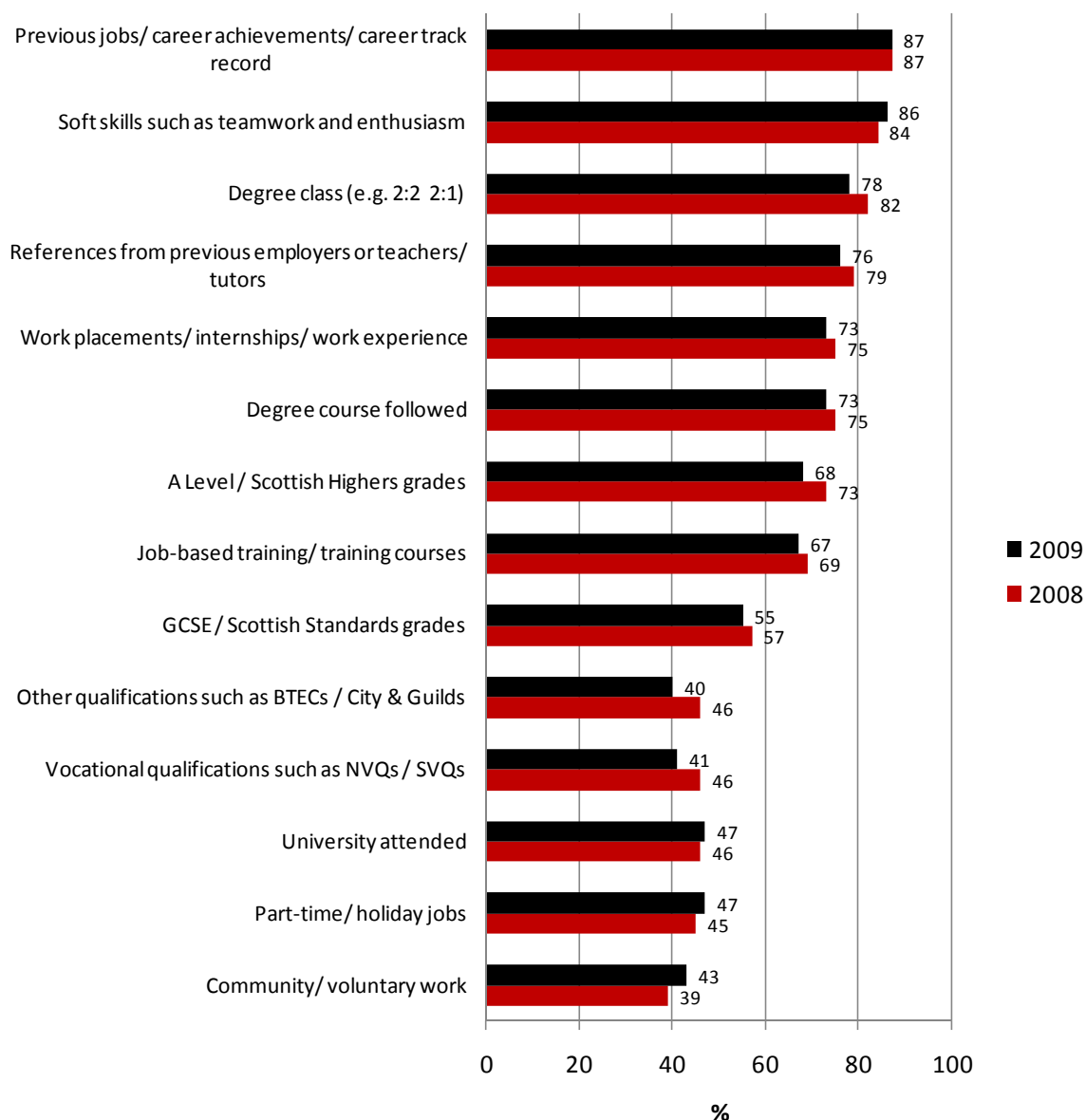
Base: employers who recruit new and recent graduates (16-17s=350) (18-19s=571)

- 7.1.2 With the exception of general IT skills, few other attributes were judged to be positive. Only four per cent rated the business awareness of 16-17s as good or very good, rising to just 11 per cent for 18-19s. One in five felt that literacy and numeracy were good or very good, rising to a third when considering those leaving at 18-19.
- 7.1.3 Perceptions of enthusiasm and commitment were higher than other attributes, but the overall picture remained negative. Some comfort may be taken from those employers that are currently engaged with schools (not just considering leavers for jobs). Tending to have a more positive view of the skills of young people, 43 per cent rated the enthusiasm of 16-17s as good or very good, compared with 32 per cent of unengaged employers. Similarly, 35 per cent felt that 18-19s were enterprising based on their experience, compared with 21 per cent of unengaged employers.

Employer views on graduates

- 7.1.4 Eighty per cent of employers surveyed recruit new and recent graduates aged over 21. When asked about their priorities for qualifications, experience and skills, once again, soft skills, references and experience are important. A-levels and GCSEs fall further down the priorities list and the class of degree obtained is valued more highly than the subject of the degree course followed or the university attended. Compared with 2008, many of the factors have slightly declined in importance. This is consistently so across types of qualification, whereas it is notable that factors relating to experience, soft skills, community work and part-time / holiday jobs have remained solid.

Figure 52: How important are each of the following when deciding on the suitability of a typical candidate who is a new or recent graduate aged 21 or over?

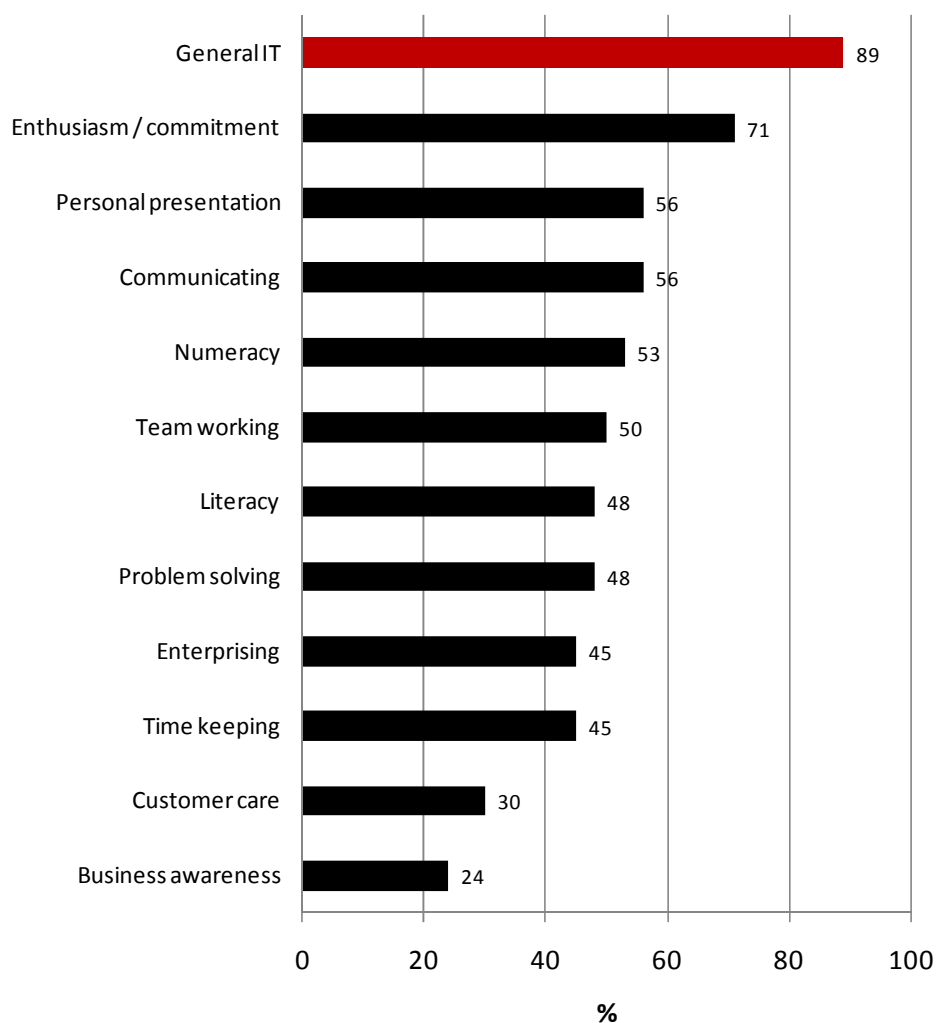


Base: employers who recruit new and recent graduates (2008=798) (2009=730)

7.1.5 Compared with their views about 16-19 school and college leavers, employers are significantly more positive about the employability skills of graduates, however there is still substantial room for improvement. Again business awareness, customer care and an

enterprising attitude are lacking for many, but communication skills are in a higher relative position for the graduate age group than they were for 16-19 year old leavers.

Figure 53: How would you rate the average new or recent graduate aged 21 or over in terms of the following skills? (good or very good)

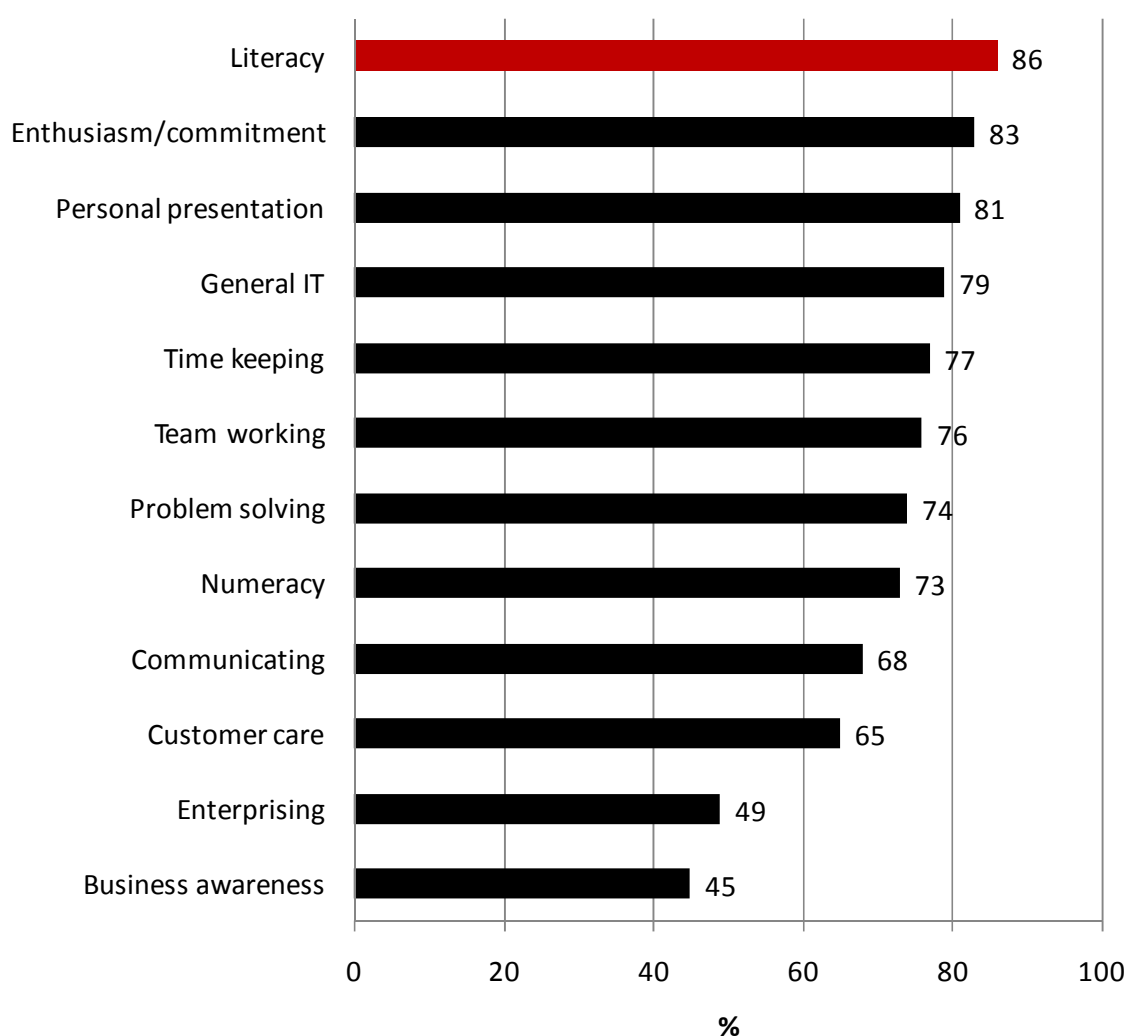


Base: employers who recruit new and recent graduates (730)

The young person's perspective

- 7.1.6 Not surprisingly, young people currently in work had a more positive perspective on the state of their employability skills at the time of their first full time job, but many did identify business awareness skills and an enterprising attitude as attributes they lacked. They did not share the opinions of employers that aspects such as literacy and personal presentation were lacking for many young people entering employment.

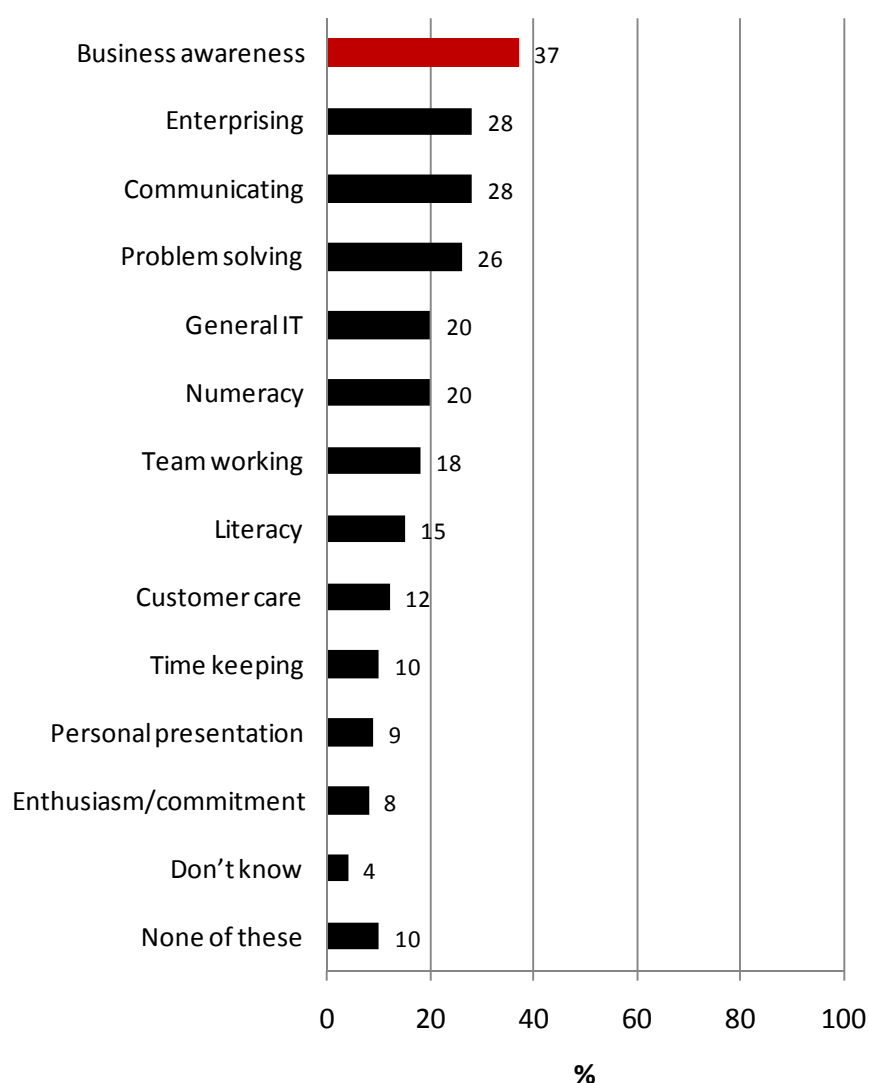
Figure 54: How would you rate your own level in each of the following skills, at the point when you started working full time? (good or very good)



Base: young people currently in work excluding don't knows (327 to 341)

7.1.7 Accordingly many felt that they would like to have developed their employability skills further. Most notably, given the low ratings applied by employers, it is their business awareness that heads the skills list. Developing an enterprising attitude, communicating and problem solving were also frequently selected and match those skills felt by employers to be least in evidence.

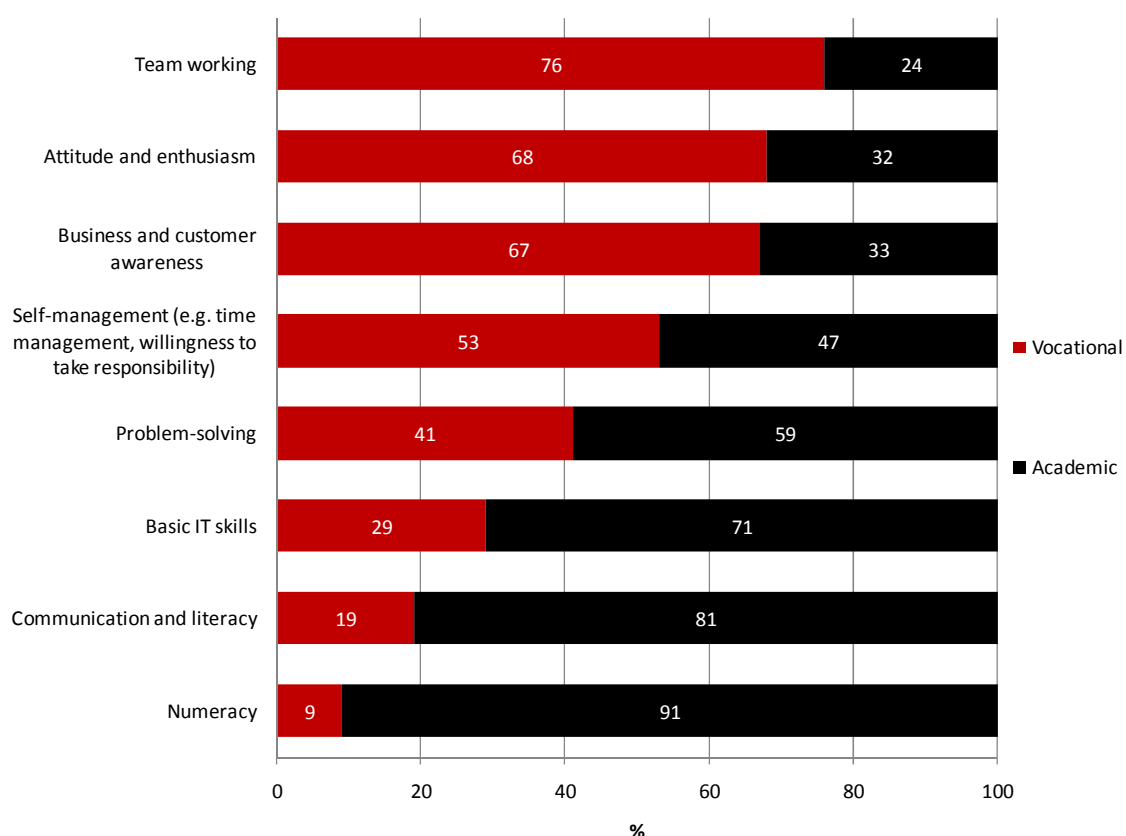
Figure 55: Which three, if any, of the following skills would you most like to have developed more while at school or college?



Base: young people currently in work (348)

- 7.1.8 There were some interesting differences between men and women, with women more likely to select business awareness (40 per cent, compared with 34 per cent) for example. Men highlighted literacy in particular, but also communication skills and team working more prominently than women.
- 7.1.9 When asked to think about the differences between new employees with academic and vocational qualifications there were some clear differences in experiences. Those with vocational qualifications were judged as stronger at team working, and to have a better attitude and business awareness. However vocational qualifications fall behind academic qualifications in developing problem solving, IT skills and – markedly – both literacy and numeracy.

Figure 56: Based on your experience of new employees, are those with academic or vocational qualifications better developed in terms of the following skills and attributes?



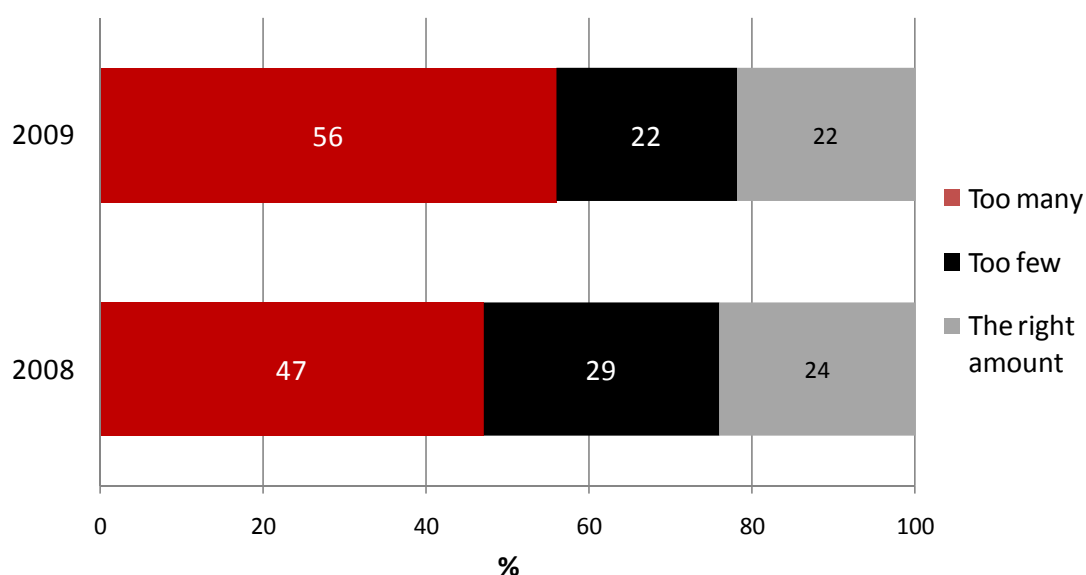
Base: all employers excluding don't knows (between 699 and 830).

7.2 Relevant skills for business

7.2.1 As in 2008, there was an even balance of response when employers considered whether academic, vocational or both types of qualification were most relevant for their organisation. Twenty-six percent felt that vocational qualifications were more relevant; this opinion was felt most strongly in the private sector (29 per cent), in stark contrast to the public sector (16 per cent) and third sector (24 per cent). Overall, 29 per cent felt that academic qualifications were more relevant and 43 per cent that both academic and vocational qualifications were considered equally.

7.2.2 However it was a widely held belief that there are too few people in the job market with vocational qualifications and practical skills. Only 16 per cent felt that there were the right number of people with these skills and over three-quarters felt that there were too few. These figures showed little change compared with 2008, but when employers considered those with academic qualifications there was a larger shift with 56 per cent believing that there are too many in the job market, compared with 47 per cent in 2008. This might reflect the impact of the recession on the job market and the increased number of graduates without employment.

Figure 57: Does the job market contain too many, too few or the right amount of people with academic qualifications?



Base: all employers excluding don't knows (91).

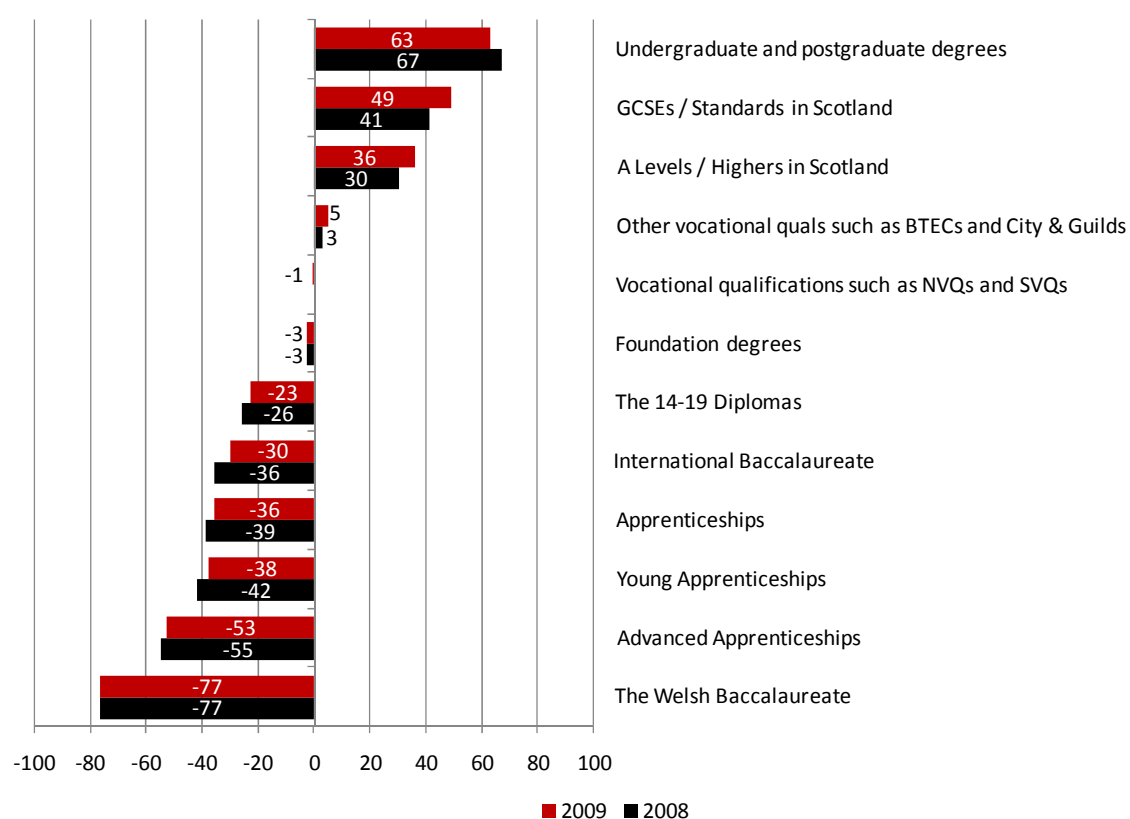
7.2.3 On balance, employers felt that graduates were relatively better prepared for the world of work than school leavers. On a ten point scale, school leavers had a mean score of 3.8, where one equals 'very poorly prepared' and 10 'very well prepared'. In contrast, graduates were rated with a mean score of 5.3. Perceptions of both school leavers and graduates were significantly higher amongst large employers. In the case of school leavers there was also a clear distinction between public and private sector employers, with those in the latter rating them at 3.6 compared with 4.2 in the public sector.

8 Apprenticeships

8.1 Apprenticeships 2009

- 8.1.1 According to provisional data on vocational qualifications released by the ONS on 22nd October, a record 234,000 people started Apprenticeships in the 2008/09 academic year. With 126,900 completing Apprenticeships during the same period, ONS statistics show the highest number of starts and completions ever in an academic year. Although the Government is still far from hitting its target, this increase in uptake of Apprenticeships is a good sign.
- 8.1.2 Looking at net knowledge scores among teachers across a range of qualifications we can see that figures have only shifted slightly, with teachers' knowledge still remaining limited. Net knowledge scores were produced by subtracting the percentage of teachers who said they had good knowledge from the percentage who had poor knowledge.

Figure 58: Level of knowledge among teachers for specific qualifications



Base: Teachers (2008=1199, 2009=1034)

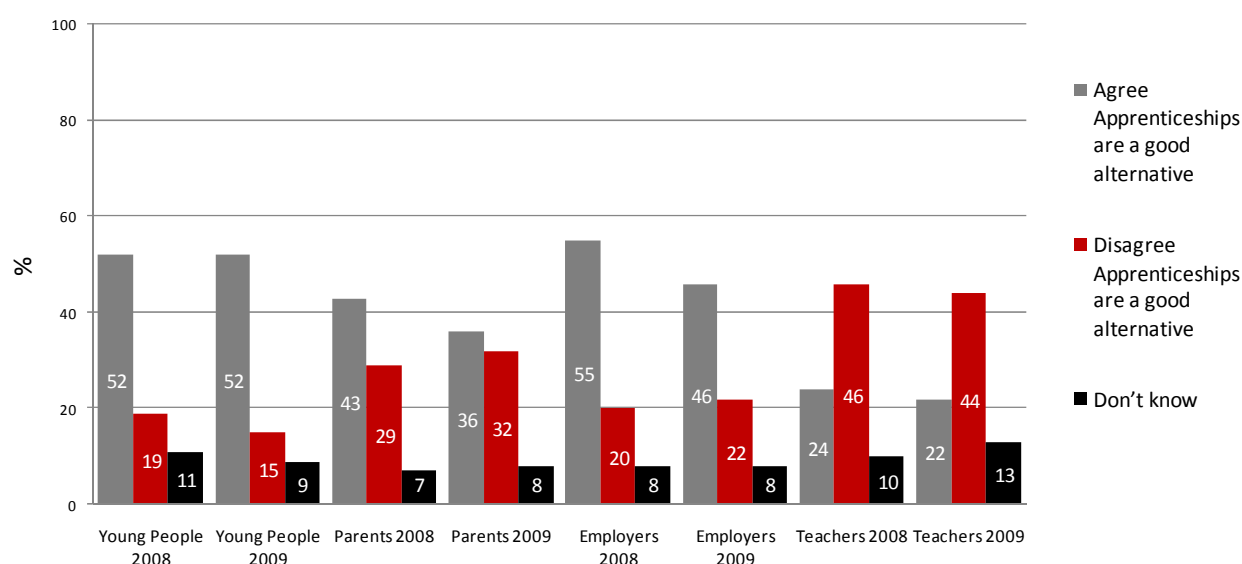
- 8.1.3 Similar to last year, aside from the Welsh Baccalaureate, net knowledge scores for Apprenticeships were the lowest of all qualifications listed in the survey. Knowledge of undergraduate/ postgraduate degrees still remains the highest and teachers' knowledge of GCSE's/ Standards in Scotland has increased since last year. This gap in teachers' knowledge and understanding continues to be a cause for concern.
- 8.1.4 Parents continue to claim a fair understanding of Apprenticeships, with a score of +14 for Apprenticeships. However, what parents actually know could be very different to what they 'claim' to know and as a result figures should be treated with caution. Teachers' responses may be more 'fair' due to them being closer to the education system.

8.2 Apprenticeships – a good alternative?

8.2.1 The four stakeholder groups were asked their opinions of Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent qualifications. Each stakeholder group was firstly asked their opinion on Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent qualifications, and then how they think other stakeholder groups would feel on this issue.

8.2.2 Before we look into how each stakeholder group feels about the others, the chart below gives an overview of the opinions of each stakeholder and how these have developed year on year.

Figure 59: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent: stakeholders' own opinions



Base: young people at KS4 (2009=335, 2008=376), parents (2009=1,013, 2008=1030), employers (2009=1,001, 2008=1,001), teachers (2009=1034, 2008=1199)

8.2.3 Young people continue to see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels with very little change in their responses since 2008. Parents on the other hand have become slightly more pessimistic, with less agreeing that Apprenticeships are a good alternative.

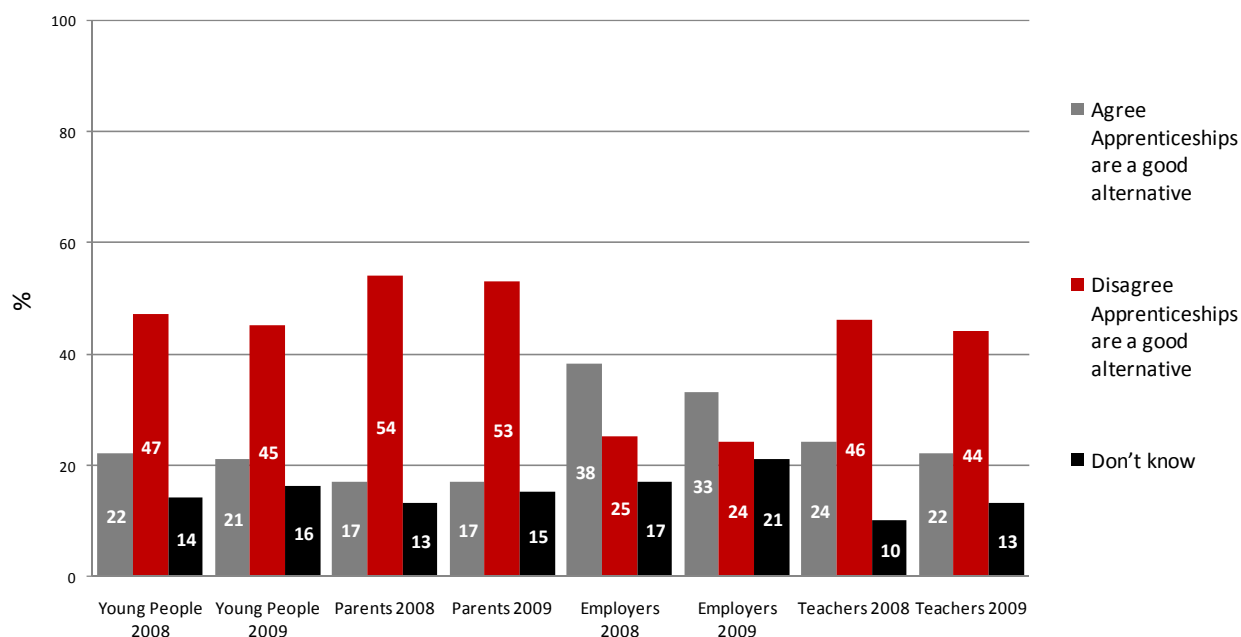
Employers continue to remain positive but the percentage who agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative has decreased since 2008. In later sections of the report we discuss potential reasons for this. Teachers continue to remain pessimistic about Apprenticeships

with very little change in their responses. The next section will discuss their views of other stakeholders in more detail.

Teachers – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

- 8.2.4 Since 2008 figures have remained similar with regards to whether or not Apprenticeships are considered a good alternative to A-levels. There has been a slight increase in the percentages, with teachers perceiving other stakeholder groups to be more likely to agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative. However, the difference is not large enough to be significant.
- 8.2.5 According to teachers, parents remain the stakeholder group least likely to think that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications. They also still believe that employers will be most likely to agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative. However, the figure for 2009 has decreased significantly from 38 per cent to 33 per cent. Teachers' perceptions seem to be in line with employers as in later sections we find employers support for Apprenticeships has also decreased.
- 8.2.6 Although teachers continue to remain pessimistic with most disagreeing that Apprenticeships are a good alternative, uncertainty among them has increased. Just over one in eight (13 per cent) said they don't know if Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels, compared with one in ten teachers in 2008. The continuing lack of knowledge could be a factor in the increasing uncertainty among teachers.

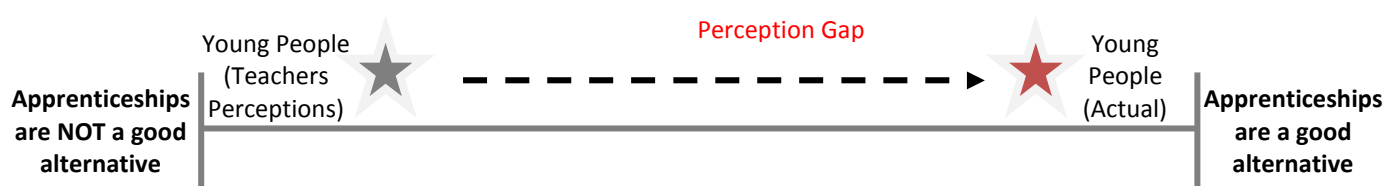
Figure 60: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent: what teachers believe themselves, and what they think other stakeholders believe



Base: Teachers (2008=1199, 2009=1034)

8.2.7 Young people's opinions continue to be misunderstood by teachers, with many feeling that young people will not consider Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels. As we found in 2008, teachers' perceptions were far from reality with many young people considering Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels and equivalent qualifications. This has remained the same in 2009 as well.

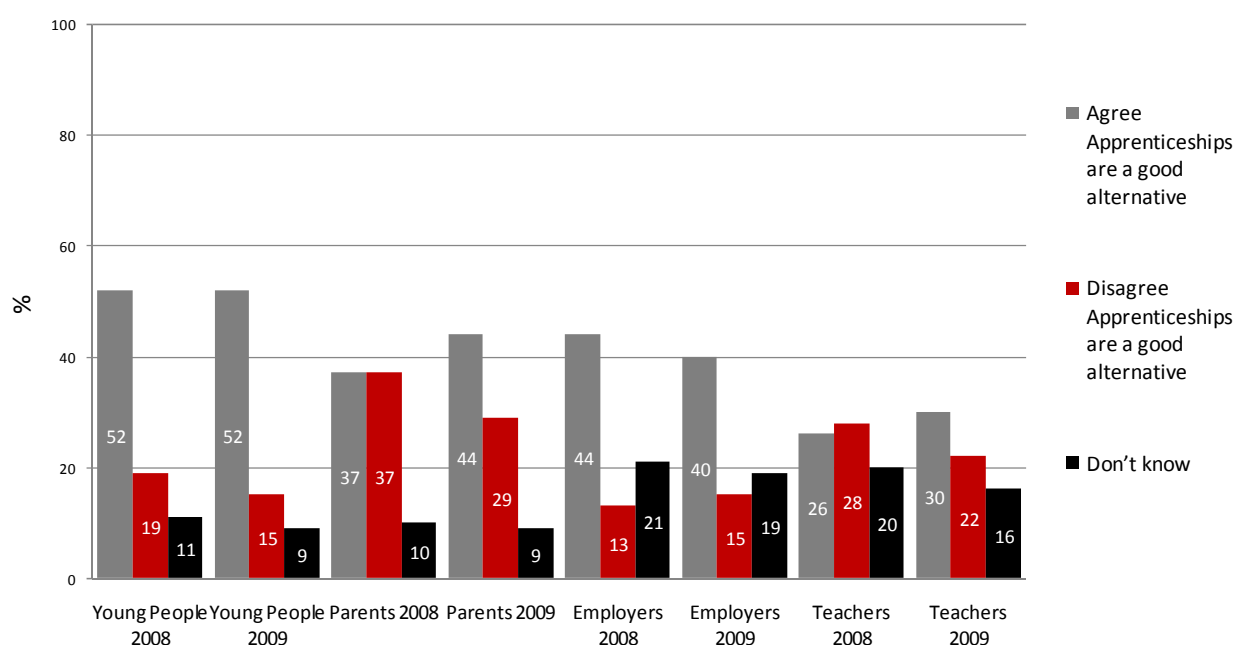
Figure 61: Teachers' perception of young people's view of Apprenticeships, compared with what young people actually think



Children and Young People – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

8.2.8 As identified in the previous section, young people were generally more positive towards Apprenticeships than expected by teachers. In 2008 over half (52 per cent) of young people agreed that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications. This figure has remained the same in 2009.

Figure 62: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent: what children and young people believe themselves, and what they think other stakeholders believe



Base: Children at Key Stage 4 (2008=376, 2009=335)

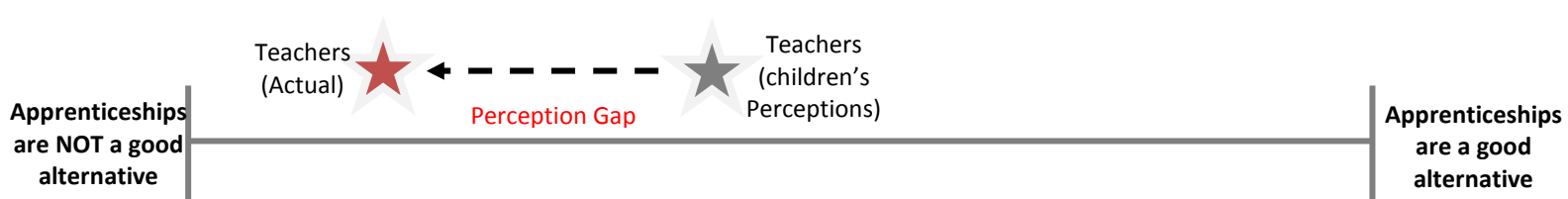
8.2.9 Young peoples' perceptions of the other stakeholder groups however have changed significantly since 2008. While last year young people were evenly divided with 37 per cent thinking their parents would see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels, and 37 per cent thinking the opposite, this year the figures differ.

8.2.10 The percentage of young people who think their parents will disagree has gone down eight percentage points from 37 to 29 per cent. Young people are more likely to think that their parents will agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative rather than disagree, with 44 per cent stating this. With the highest number of Apprenticeships completed ever in an academic year, perhaps students are seeing how beneficial they are and in turn think their

parents will as well. However, when we compare perception against reality in the next section there is clearly a gap. While in 2008 young people underestimated their parents support, this year it seems they have slightly overestimated.

8.2.11 In 2008 young people underestimated teachers' lack of support for Apprenticeships and as the figure below shows, this has remained the case for 2009 as well.

Figure 63: Children & young people's opinion on Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent



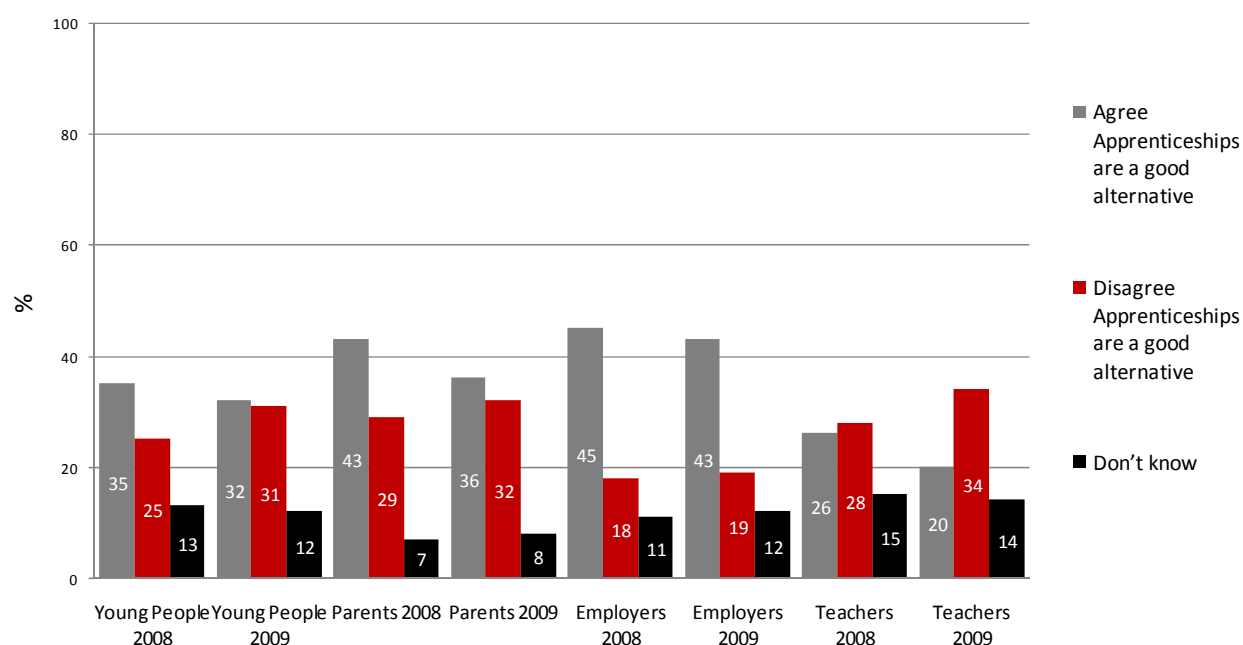
8.2.12 Teachers and young people think, correctly, that employers are likely to regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels.

Parents – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

8.2.13 While in 2008 parents were more likely to agree that Apprenticeships were a good alternative, opinions have shifted slightly this year with only 36 per cent of parents agreeing Apprenticeships are a good alternative compared with 43 per cent in 2008.

8.2.14 As noted already, in 2009 parents are less positive about Apprenticeships than young people expect.

Figure 64: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent: what parents believe themselves, and what they think other stakeholders believe.



Base: Parents (2008=1030 2009=1013)

8.2.15 Teachers perceived parents to be more negative about Apprenticeships with over half (53 per cent) disagreeing that parents would think Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels. As the figure above shows, parents are not as negative about Apprenticeships as teachers expected.

8.2.16 Other survey findings that could shed some light on why parents are less positive towards Apprenticeships:

- Last year, fifteen per cent of parents with a child at Key Stage 3 said their child prefers to learn academically. In 2009 the number of parents who state their child at Key Stage 3 prefers to learn academically has increased significantly to 22 per cent. The slight dip in positivity towards Apprenticeships may be a result of a shift in parent's perceptions of their children's learning preferences.

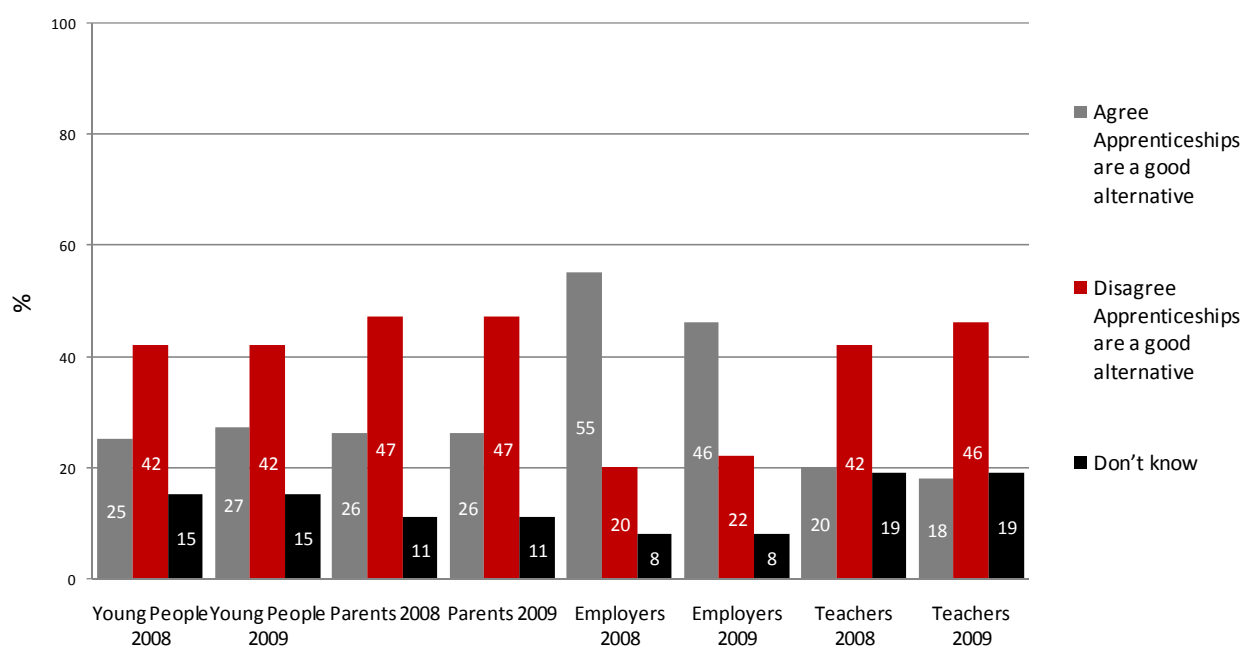
- 8.2.17 There is a significant difference in not only parent's views but their views of their children. Not only are parents less likely to agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels but they also think their children will be less likely to regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative. A quarter of parents disagreed that their children would regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels, in 2009 this figure increased to 32 per cent.
- 8.2.18 There is clearly a perception gap among parents and young people. While in 2008 young people underestimated their parents support in regards to Apprenticeships, in 2009 there seems to be a shift with young people slightly overestimating support.

Employers – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

8.2.19 Employers remain the most positive towards Apprenticeships of all the stakeholder groups; nonetheless their support for Apprenticeships has declined significantly.

8.2.20 In 2008 over half (55 per cent) of employers agreed that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications; this figure has dropped to 46 per cent in 2009. With the impacts of the recession hitting businesses harder this year, it is not surprising that figures have been affected to some extent.

Figure 65: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent: what employers believe themselves, and what they think other stakeholders believe.



Base: Employers (2008=1001, 2009=1001)

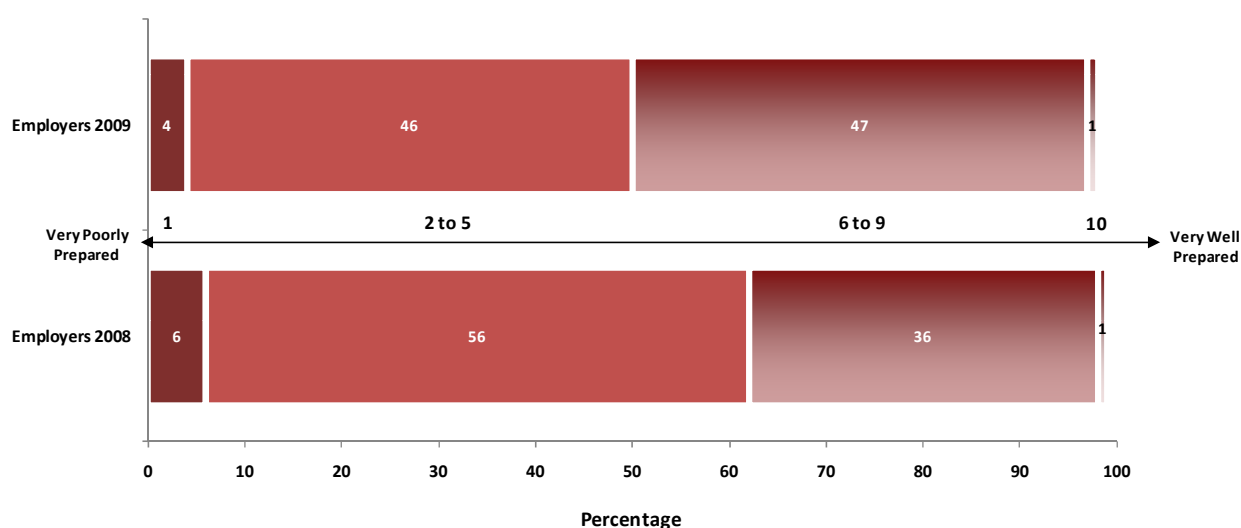
8.2.21 The perception gap between employers and teachers still exists with employees perceiving teachers to be far more positive about Apprenticeships than they actually are.

8.2.22 Despite young people being more positive and parents being slightly less positive about Apprenticeships in 2009, employers' perceptions of both groups have remained the same in 2009.

8.2.23 As discussed in Chapter 7, opinions of graduates readiness for the world of work have shifted significantly in 2009. Forty-seven per cent of employers think graduates are well prepared for the world of work compared with 36 per cent in 2008.

8.2.24 The results show that there has been a decrease in support for Apprenticeships by employers yet an increase in confidence that graduates are ready for the workplace. Perhaps employers have experienced that recent university graduates are far more prepared for the working world than they used to be and as a result feel the academic route is the better option.

Figure 66: Employers' opinion on how prepared school leavers are for the world of work

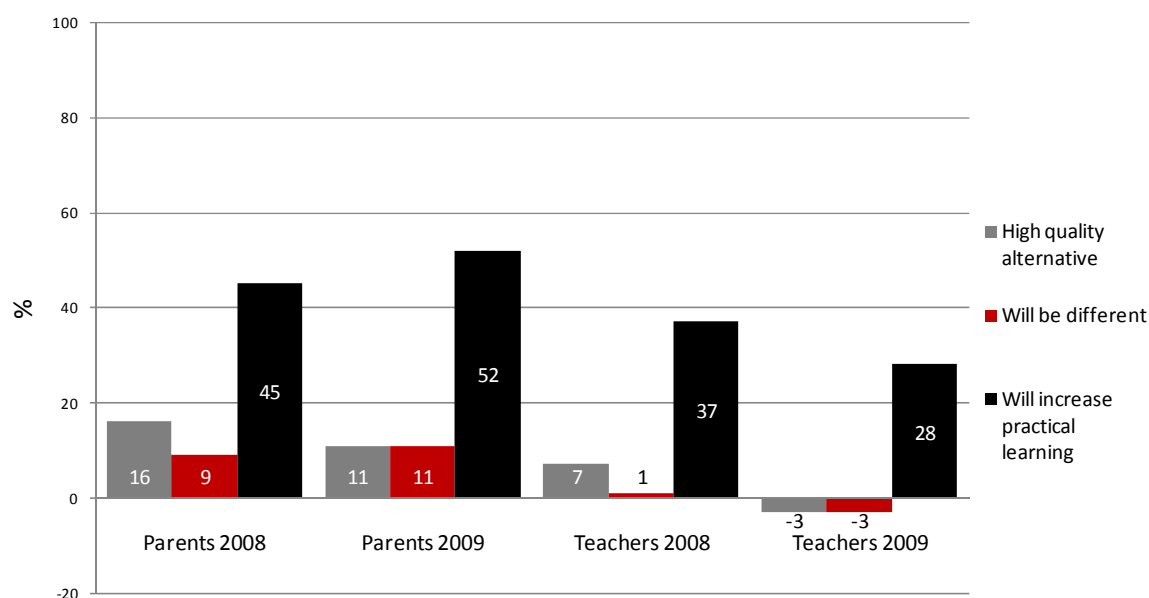


Base: Employers (2008=1,001, 2009=1001)

9 14-19 Diplomas

- 9.1.1 Awareness of 14-19 Diplomas among employers remains low with one in ten rating their knowledge of them as good or very good and seven in ten rating their knowledge as poor. Figures for parents' awareness on Diplomas also remain the same with 35 per cent stating that they had heard of Diplomas before doing the survey. The number of teachers that state their school offers the Diplomas as an option has also remained the same.
- 9.1.2 It is surprising that the uptake of Diplomas has not increased since 2008 and although there could be a variety of reasons for this: negative media, lack of teachers support and limited uptake of Diplomas by Russell Universities could be potential factors.
- 9.1.3 The figure below shows net agreement scores to demonstrate the strength of feeling that parents and teachers have on specific aspects of the 14-19 Diplomas. The net agreement score is calculated by taking away the proportion of respondents who disagreed with a statement from the proportion who agreed.

Figure 67 : Net agreement scores in relation to 14-19 Diplomas



Base: Teachers in England/Wales (2008=1,079, 2009=945), parents in England/Wales having heard of 14-19 Diplomas (2008=368, 2009=323)

- 9.1.4 At a glance it can be seen that parents continue to be more positive towards Diplomas than teachers. Nonetheless from 2008 to 2009 there has clearly been a significant change in teachers' attitudes towards Diplomas.
- 9.1.5 While in 2008 teachers agreed on balance that Diplomas would offer children a high quality alternative to traditional academic qualifications, in 2009 this is no longer the case. With a net score of -3, teachers no longer agree that Diplomas are a high quality alternative. So what could have caused this change in opinion?
- Early in 2009 there were many concerns raised about the value of Diplomas with Russell Group universities needing reassurance that Diplomas were academically sound - *'we want to be fully assured that [Diplomas] are sufficiently robust and challenging academically'*.
 - In May 2009, an article published by the Daily Telegraph stated that data published by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) suggested only four in ten degrees at institutions belonging to the elite Russell Group, which includes Oxford and Cambridge, would be open to students taking Diplomas.
 - In October 2009, another issue arose around a government advertisement which claimed the new Diploma would get teenagers into "any university". However the Advertising Standards Authority deemed this advertisement to be misleading because not all universities accepted all five Diploma courses.
- 9.1.6 All the media controversy and fears that Diplomas are not carrying their weight could provide some indication as to why net scores among teachers have decreased for the view that Diplomas offer a high quality alternative.
- 9.1.7 Although parents' net agreement score for Diplomas increasing practical learning has increased by seven points, their score of +11 for the view that the Diplomas will offer a high quality alternative to traditional qualifications is has reduced by 5 points since 2008. If parents are unable to see Diplomas providing a high quality alternative then their overall views of Diplomas is poor. Their perceptions of Diplomas could potentially impact on uptake: if parents don't see Diplomas as having the same academic potential as A-levels then the likelihood is that they will not encourage their children to take them.

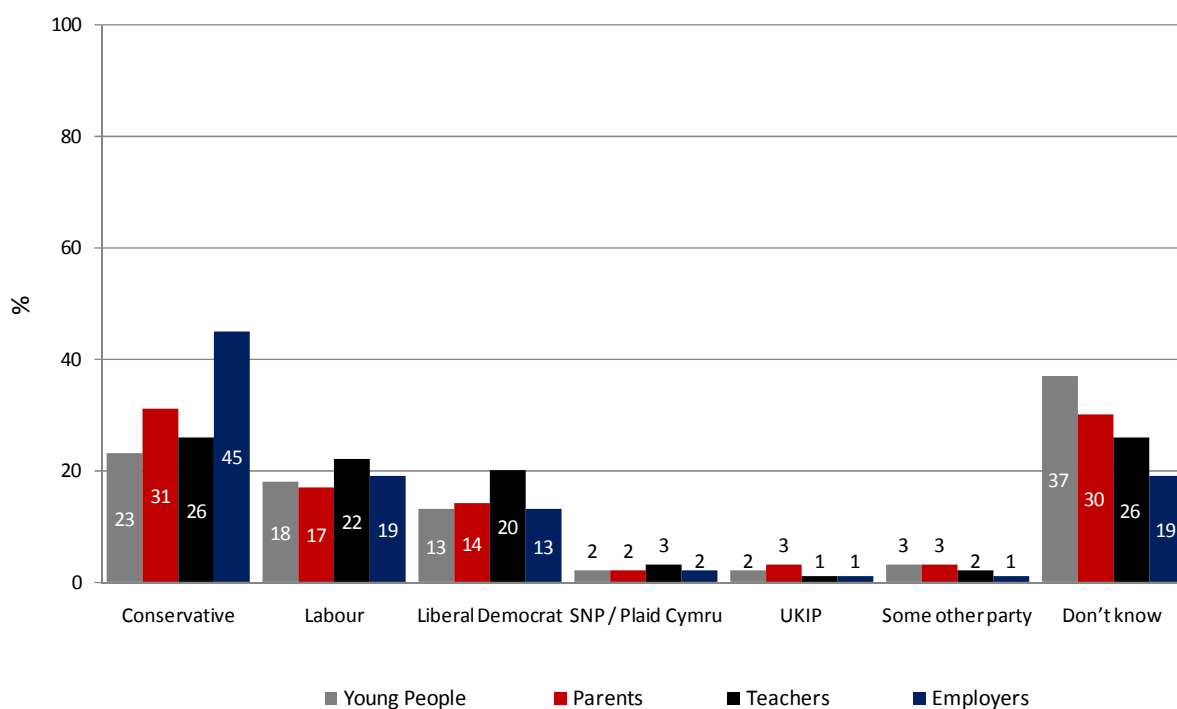
- 9.1.8 Parents are still more likely than teachers to agree that the Diplomas will be different from past and present qualifications. Their net agreement score has increased from +9 to +11 in 2009.
- 9.1.9 A distinguishing feature of Diplomas is the focus on work experience. However, teachers have become less likely to agree that Diplomas increase practical learning (+28 compared with +37 last year). This indicates that, now that Diplomas have been around for a year, some teachers may have formed the opinion that they are in fact situated closer to the academic than the vocational end of the spectrum.
- 9.1.10 Employers also continue to believe that Diplomas will be seen as having a lower status than GCSEs and A-levels with over two-thirds (69 per cent) stating this. Although employer knowledge of the Diplomas is poor and work with employers needs to be done to raise their awareness, the recent media coverage of Diplomas does not seem to have helped the situation.

10 Education Policy

10.1.1 All stakeholder groups agreed that the Conservative party would be most likely to improve education and training over the next five years or so, if they were in power, particularly employers with 45 per cent stating this.

10.1.2 The second political party thought most likely to make improvements was Labour followed by Liberal Democrats.

Figure 68: Stakeholder views on which political party can make the most improvement in education and training in the next 5 years



Base: young people over 16 (1,414), parents (1,013), teachers (1,034), employers (1,001)

10.1.3 As would be expected, young people were most likely to state they don't know who would be most likely to make improvements with over a third (37 per cent) stating this. With limited knowledge of the issues at their age, the results are to be expected. However, a high percentage of other stakeholder groups also stated don't know. These results seem to

indicate a lack of communication on the part of political parties regarding their specific education policies. With a general election approaching soon this is concerning.

- 10.1.4 Aside from young people, parents were the most likely to say they didn't know (30 per cent). Mothers were far more likely to be unsure of which political party can make improvements with 38 per cent stating this compared with 20 per cent of fathers.

11 Longitudinal comparisons

- 11.1.1 The children and young people who took part in the 2008 research were again invited to the 2009 survey, to show how their views and attitudes may have developed over time. In total, slightly less than half the total sample in 2009 was composed of these repeat respondents. The young people's responses in 2009 were cross tabulated against those from 2008 for comparison purposes. In many cases, there were too few respondents in particular subgroups to conduct meaningful analysis. Nevertheless, some significant shifts of opinion emerged.
- 11.1.2 Young people's intentions regarding their next step (Key Stage 4 or Key 5) were examined for any changes. At Key Stage 3, the vast majority (96 per cent) of those who planned to take GCSEs last year are still planning to take them, with only four per cent having changed their plans. At Key Stage 4 however there was a more significant shift. Of those who said last year they were planning to take A-levels, only 85 per cent still have the same intention in 2009. Six per cent now plan to do vocational qualifications such as NVQs/SVQs, and a further six per cent to take other vocational qualifications such as BTECs or City and Guilds.
- 11.1.3 As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a reduction in practical learning between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The longitudinal analysis suggests that a slight reduction may take place across the course of each key stage, as well as between key stages. Among those in Key Stage 3 who said they took part in practical learning fairly often last year, only two-thirds (66 per cent) still hold this view. Twenty-seven per cent of these young people now say they take part 'not very often', while six per cent say very rarely. At Key Stage 4, there were too few respondents to base firm conclusions on, however the results indicate a similar pattern to Key Stage 3.
- 11.1.4 At Key Stage 3, only half (52 per cent) of those who thought there was the right amount of practical learning last year still feel this way, while 39 per cent now think there is too little. Conversely, a quarter (24 per cent) of those who thought in 2008 that there was too little practical learning now feel the level is correct, although the majority (69 per cent) continue to feel it is insufficient.
- 11.1.5 Opinions on the relative importance of academic and vocational qualifications also showed some development. At Key Stage 3, only half (52 per cent) of those who previously thought

both types of qualification equally important said the same again, while over a quarter (27 per cent) now believe academic qualifications to be more important. Three per cent of this group now think vocational qualifications more important, while a significant 18 per cent were unsure. As discussed in Chapter 3, children at Key Stage 3 showed an indicative shift overall in favour of academic qualifications, and the longitudinal findings appear to support this.

- 11.1.6 There were also significant shifts in the 'core' attitudes, in both positive and negative directions. Among those who agreed last year that vocational learning is only for those who don't do well at school, only 56 per cent still agreed with this in 2009. Twenty-six per cent of this group now disagree with the statement, while 19 per cent had a neutral opinion. Among the majority who disagreed with this view in 2008, most (70 per cent) continued to have this view, while only 14 per cent now agree.
- 11.1.7 As discussed in Chapter 4, children and young people have become slightly more likely overall to think that vocational learning provides a good education. This is also borne out by the longitudinal findings. Among those who disagreed with this in 2008, fewer than half (46 per cent) still hold this view, while a third (31 per cent) now agree that vocational learning provides a good education. By contrast, those who agreed with the statement in 2008 remain most likely to agree with it, (78 per cent) while only three per cent have changed to disagree.
- 11.1.8 The statement on vocational learning leading to a good career showed a similar pattern. Those who disagreed last year were most likely to have changed their views; indeed only 28 per cent still disagreed with this statement. A third (32 per cent) now agree that vocational learning often leads to a good career, while 39 per cent had a neutral opinion. Those who agreed last year were likely to still agree (78 per cent), while only four per cent had changed their view to disagree, and 18 per cent to neutral.
- 11.1.9 These results suggest some positive developments, with shifts of opinion in the positive direction tending to outweigh those in the negative direction. However, as shown in Chapter 4, views at the overall level had either not changed or changed only by fairly small degrees. Any changes among the longitudinal component should be seen in the context of the overall findings.